Movieline

December 1994

Ten Best Unproduced Screenplays

The new, hair-extended
Eric Stoltz

Natasha Richardson
goes for the glamour

Joe Queenan on
The Latest Trend in On-Screen Mutilation

Plus
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Valeria Golino
Peter Riegert
and more

Annette Bening

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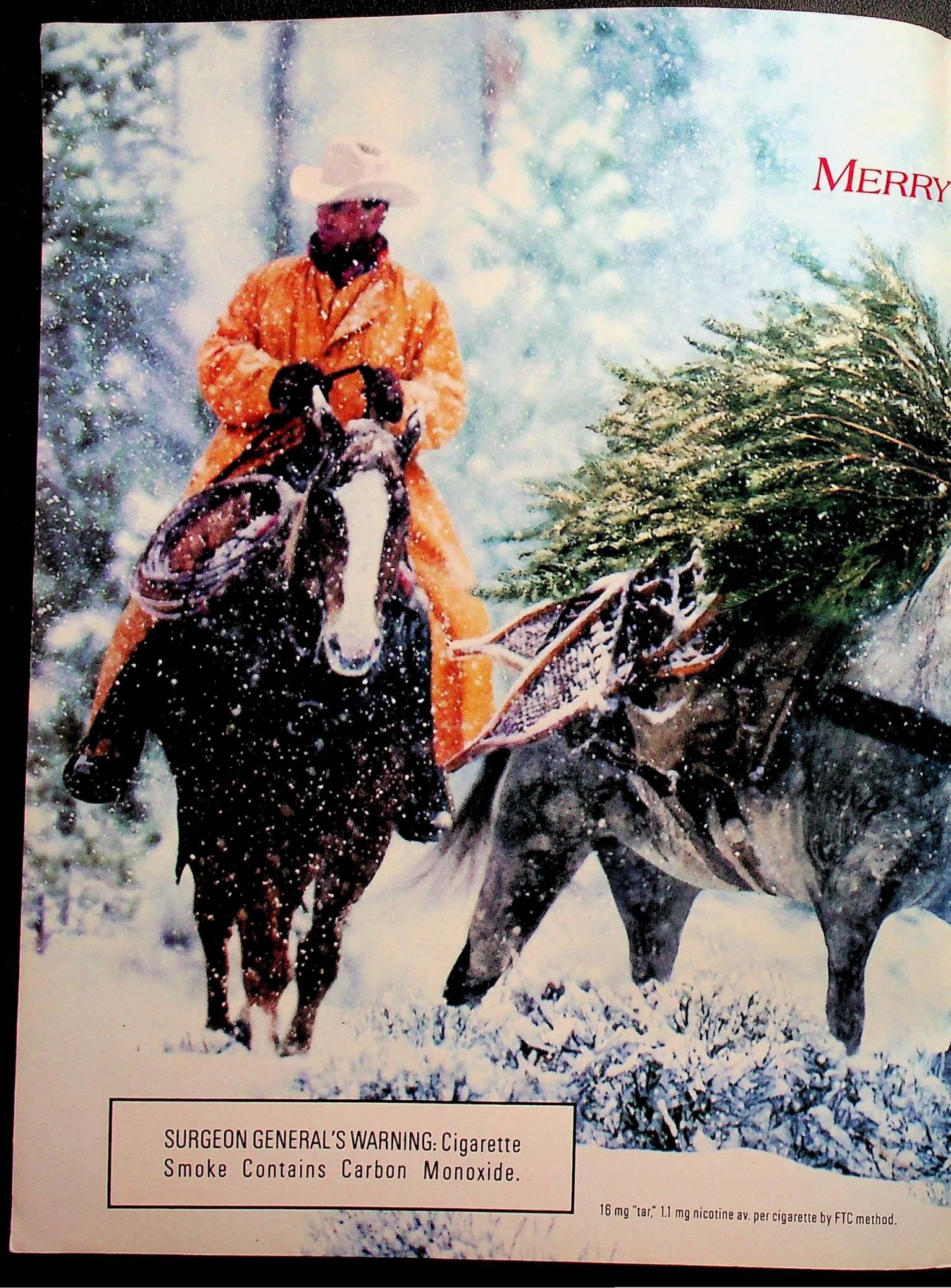

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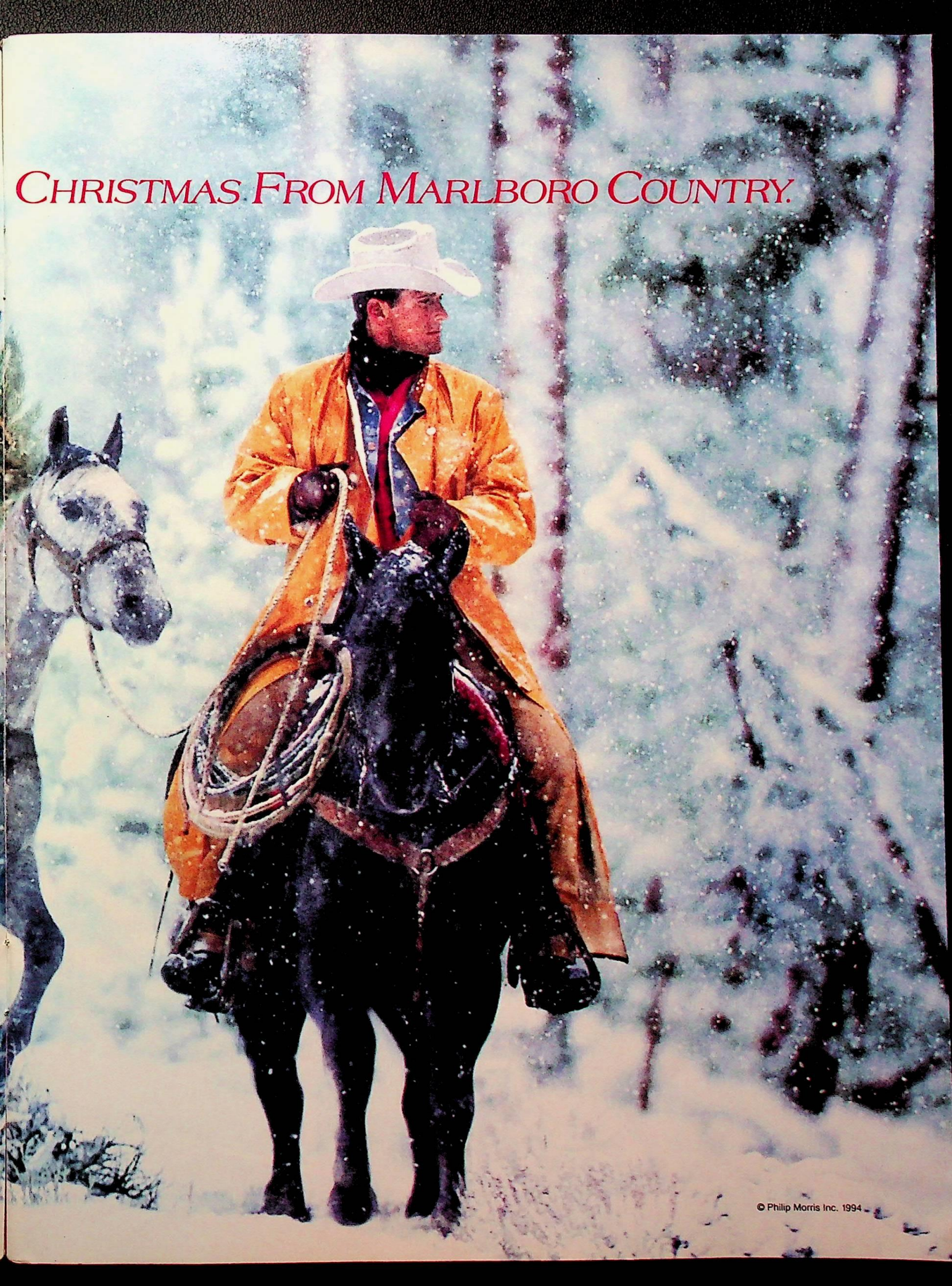
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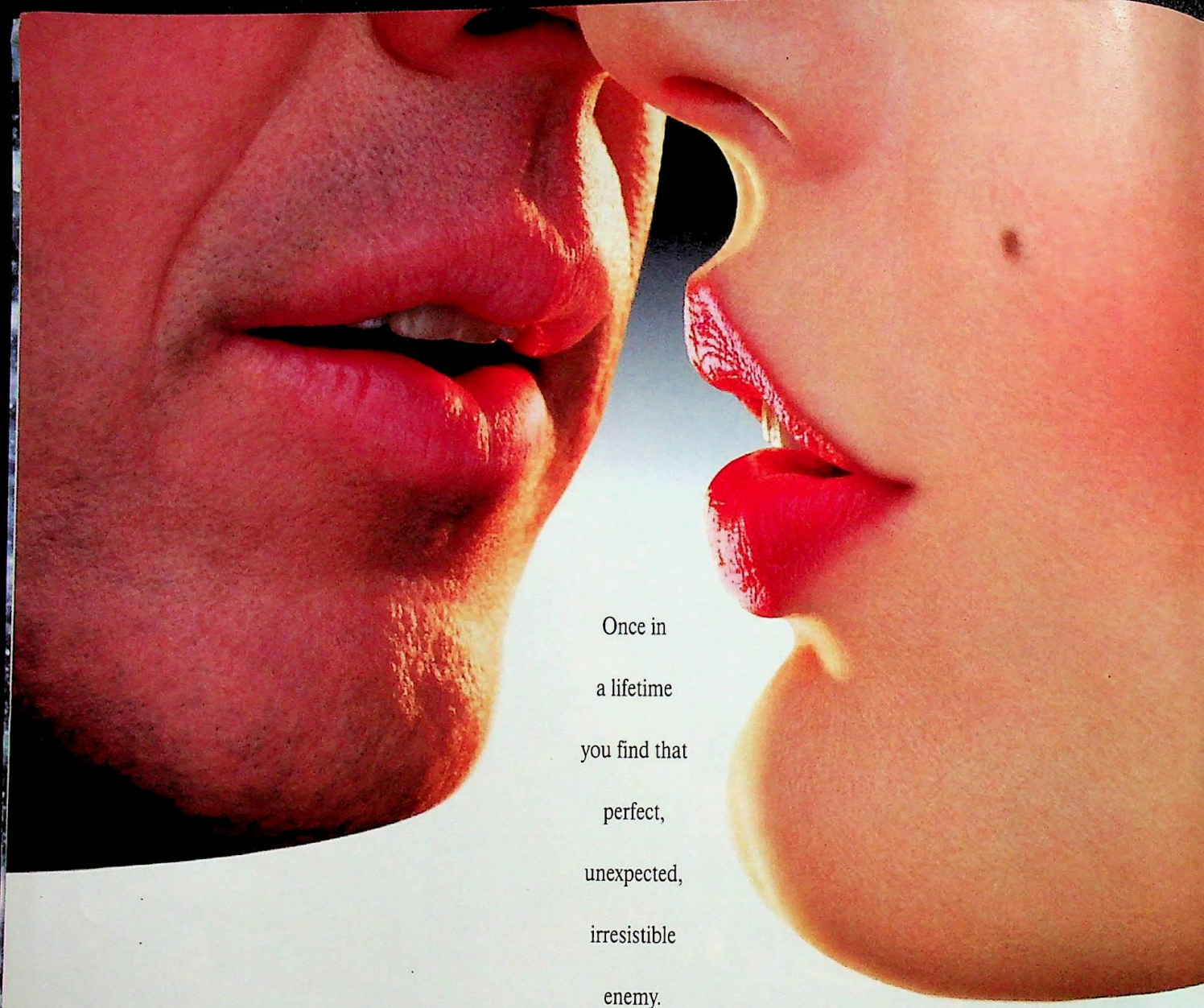

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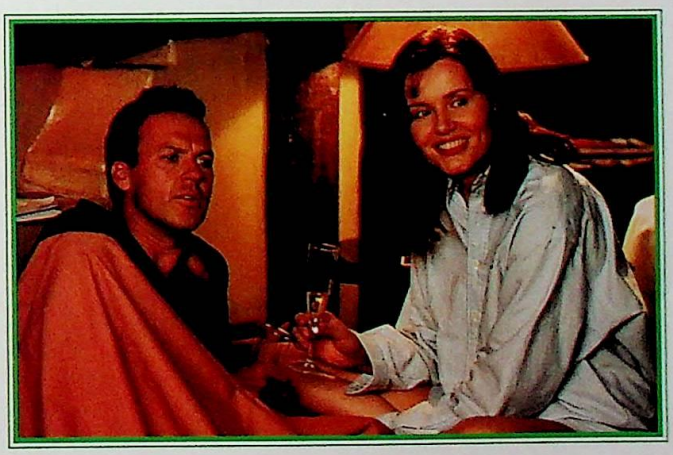

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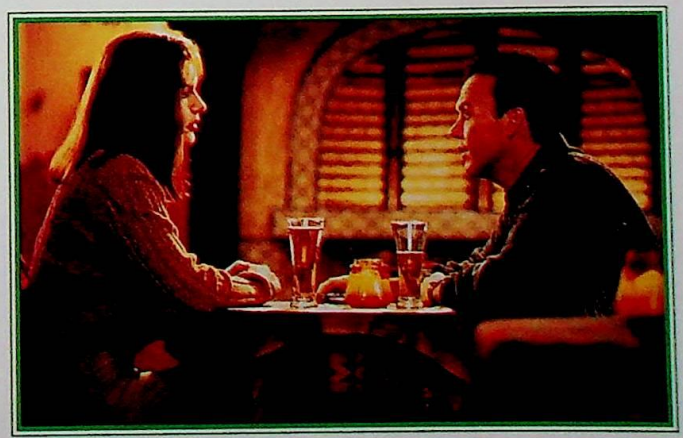

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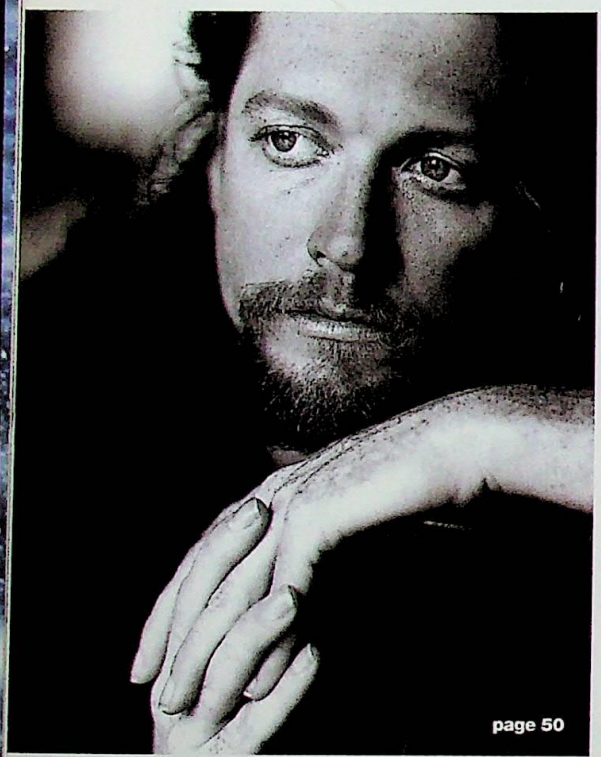
a private star • It's been almost three years since **Annette Bening** lit up *Bugsy* and married her co-star, **Warren Beatty**. Two babies and one movie later, she chats here about everything from why women should stop complaining about how Hollywood treats them to how you should tell your kids about sex

by Lawrence Grobel



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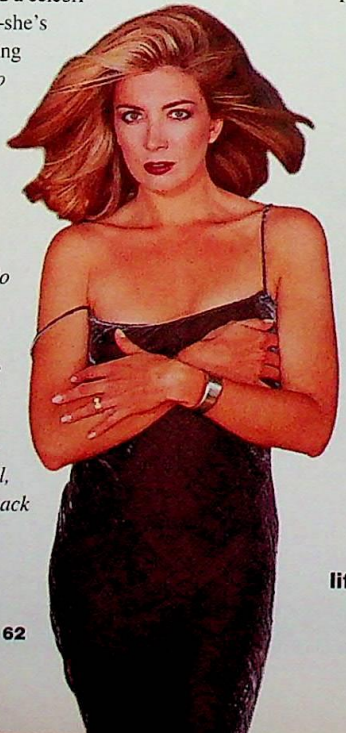

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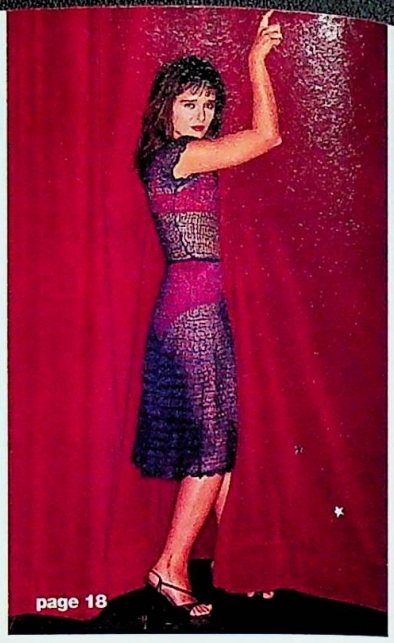

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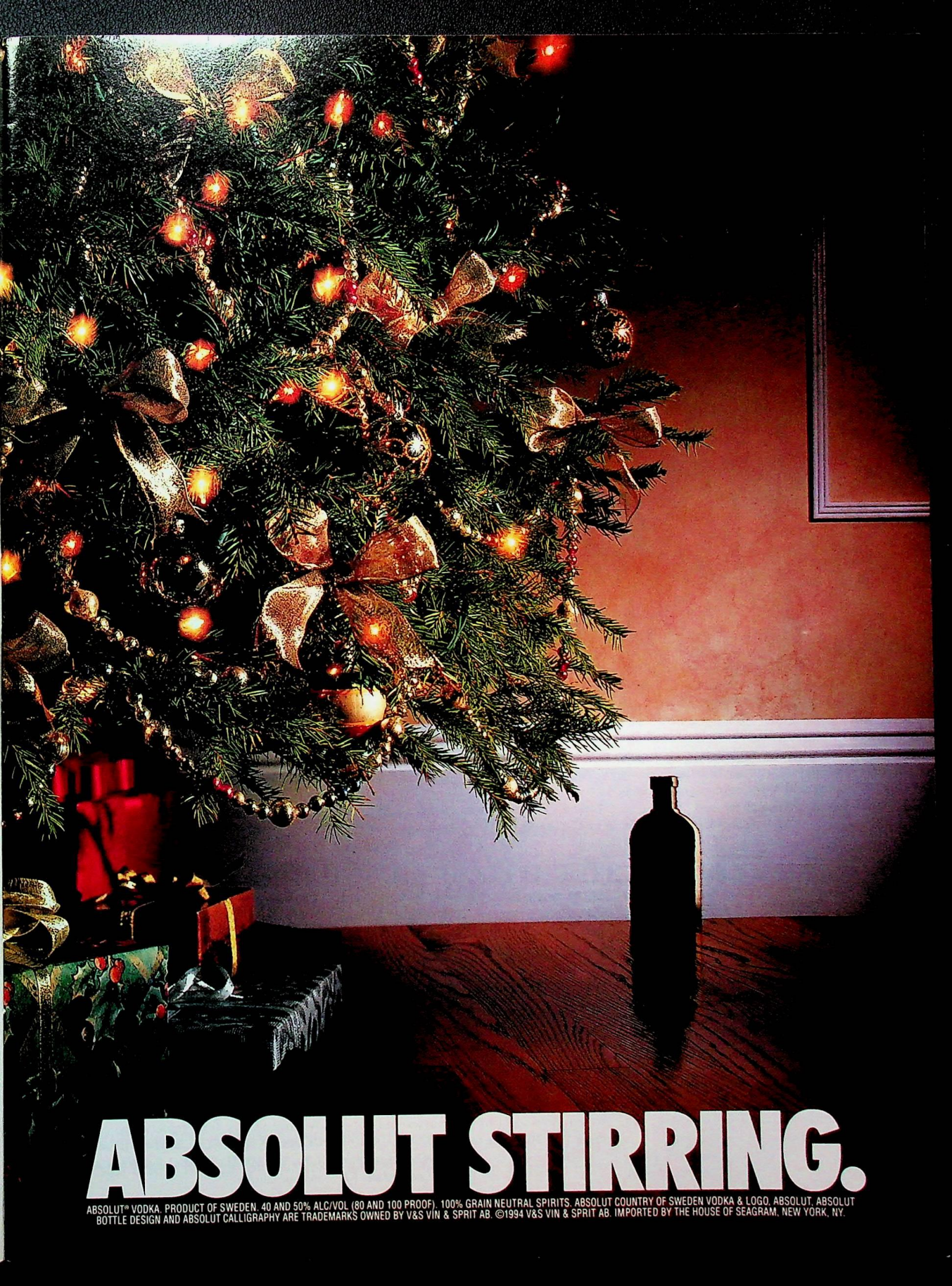

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Letters

Unwarranted: Dead or Alive?

Recently an article written by one Joe Queenan was brought to my attention. It was supposed to be a review [of] a new Steve McQueen biography ("Unwanted: Dead or Alive," September). However, it quickly deteriorated into a vicious, scathing, bitchy and unwarranted attack on an actor whose life and career contributed much to the American scene if not the world. To say that it infuriated me is to put it mildly. I was informed by the magazine that the man who wrote this article is 38 years old—more or less. Well, at 38 years of age Steve McQueen was at the peak of his career and was the highest-paid movie star in the world. Perhaps Queenan can apprise *Movieline* readers [of] his sterling qualifications that probably gross him a neat $500 an article. If that. And what a credit. *Movieline* mag! Wow! I'll match anything this man has written against Steve's many accomplishments such as *Papillon*, *Love With the Proper Stranger*, *The Great Escape*, *Bullitt*, *The Sand Pebbles* (for which the Motion Picture Academy nominated McQueen as Best Actor), and others too many to list. Also, to put down Ali MacGraw for doing infomercials was reprehensible. There is nothing dishonorable about that, you know. It's an honest living. A hell of a lot better than trashing people you don't know so you can make some sort of reputation for yourself. Queenan's *imagined* clever turn of phrases are truly pathetic. Incidentally, Ali MacGraw has made *The New York Times* bestseller list. Top that, will you, Queenan. Pity that your article is never going to create the kind of controversy you so obviously crave to put you on the map.

Neile Adams McQueen Toffel
Los Angeles, CA

If only we could *get Joe Queenan to write for us for $500.*

Letter of the Month

The first time I picked up *Movieline*, I subscribed, and have since been in heaven. Thanks to Joe Queenan for keeping perspective on how fucked-up celebrities (especially Mickey Rourke) can be, and to Christopher Hunt for showing how fucked-up men (especially him) can be. Thanks, too, for acknowledging smaller actors and directors (no thanks to you, *Premiere*!) like Hal Hartley, Quentin Tarantino, Gary Oldman, Tim Roth and Anthony LaPaglia. Big kiss—

Cynthia E. Jones
Sacramento, CA

Is Charlie Sheen a Champ. . .

Re: Your Charlie Sheen cover story, "Charlie's Devils" (September). It's refreshing to see actors who have minds of their own. I find Sheen's "political incorrectness" curiously appealing.

A. Holder
Oklahoma City, OK

It takes some set of huevos to be *that* honest. But what's the big deal about Charlie Sheen's passion for cheerleaders and escorts? Show me one man who says he doesn't have a taste for both and I'll call him a fucking liar!

Cinnamon Tatum
Gardendale, AL

Charlie *is* Charlie. I love it!

Cynthia Smith
Chicago, IL

I didn't know Sheen was so f**king funny. I dig smart-asses, they're willing to take no motherf**king sh*t from no motherf**ker!

Kyle Jones
Fair Oaks, CA

. . . or a Cheesebag?

Through what ungodly circumstance did Charlie Sheen acquire the vocabulary of David Mamet and the mental capacity of Cameron Diaz? Someone should wire his mouth shut before he hurts himself.

Jonathan A. Cullum
Tipton, TN

I used to think Sheen was gorgeous, and wished he was gay. Now I wish he was *mute*.

Rick Sayre
Miami, FL

Sheen wonders why he's not working with Coppola and Bertolucci. Could it be because he's an obnoxious asshole?

Jane Bohn
Greensboro, NC

The only word Sheen seems to know how to conjugate or use is the word "fuck." He used it as a noun, verb, adverb and adjective.

Mrs. Mary Farr
Corona, CA

Sheen is a cheesebag! I'll save the money I would have spent on his movies and put it toward my *Movieline* renewal.

Guy Mazzaglia
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Pauly, Does This Mean the End Is Near?

Regarding your article "All O'Shore" in the August issue: I have seen the beginning of the end of humanity, and I have named him Pauly Shore.

Paul Constable
Burlington, Ontario, Canada

Don't Mention It

Thanks! I finally noticed the error of my ways. I was buying stupid bimbo magazines like *Seventeen* and *YM* for a measly few pages of entertainment coverage. I picked up *Movieline* and it dawned on me: *this* is a *real* entertainment magazine with *real* stars, not just stupid Joey Lawrence. Thanx a zillion! I quit wasting my babysitting money on things I wasn't enjoying, and now I'm a full subscriber to *Movieline*.

Nicole Darling
Pasadena, CA

P.S. I still get *Sassy*—they have good makeup tips.

Maybe You Could Define "Higher Power" for Us, Pal

Re: "King of Kings" (July). Did Joe Queenan ever view Elvis's performances in *Flaming Star*, *Wild in the Country* and *Follow That Dream*, just to name a few of his "non-formula" films? He pointed out the co-stars who didn't become successful after making an Elvis "classic" [suggesting] a Presley movie would kill a career. Allow me to name a few performers who went on to some success *after* co-starring with Elvis: Mary Tyler Moore, Charles Bronson, Burgess Meredith, Ann-Margret, Pat Buttram, Carolyn Jones, Vic Morrow, Tuesday Weld, Angela Lansbury, Walter Matthau—can I stop now? The fact that Presley graced our world for over 42 years gives some proof of a higher power. The fact that Queenan is allowed to pen articles like "King of Kings" proves that the inmates are running the asylum. Would you be interested in a profile of Queenan? I'd title it "Queen of Queens." Catchy, eh? Accurate? I'm sure!

Jan Richard Gorlin
Maplewood, NJ

We love to hear from readers who can spell: "Letters," *Movieline*, 1141 S. Beverly Dr., L.A., CA 90035. Beware! Published missives may be edited.

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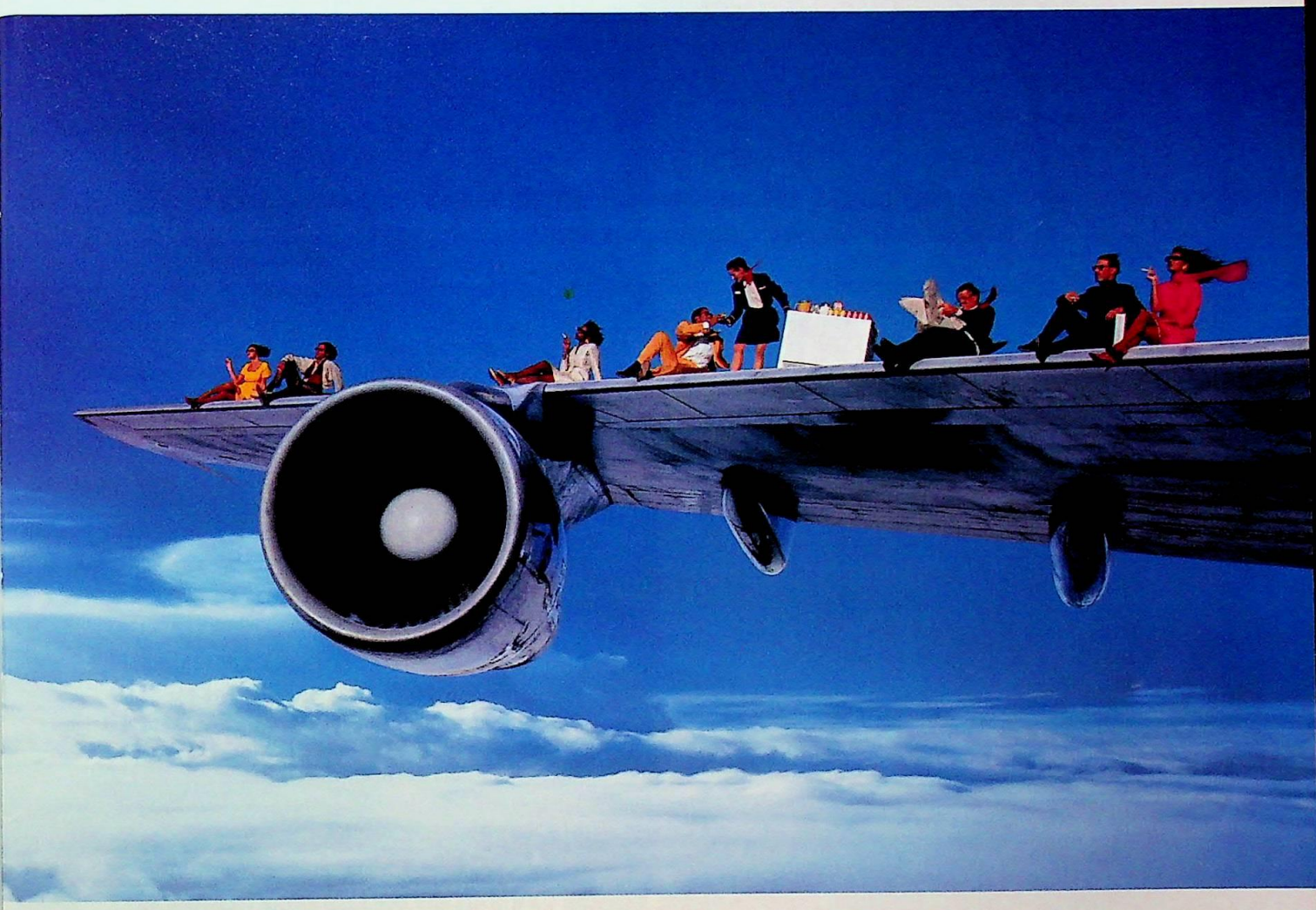

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Hollywood ink

by murgatroyd

family jewels If that fetching, performing wife wants to hold on to her man, she'd better get back *pronto* to the location where he is filming his new movie. It seems her starry mate, a womanizer who maybe was never the safest bet for a monogamous marriage in the first place, is *already* embroiled in a torrid affair with his leading lady. What he may soon find out is that his acclaimed co-star plotted the entire romance to gain control over the movie. And from what we hear, it's working: armed with the might of her leading man, the prima donna has gotten the director to beef up her part, to hire crew who'll do her bidding and to fire those who won't. What will happen when wifey discovers that her husband has been sleeping around? We predict fireworks.

family size **It can't be true that misperceptions about the size of a volatile young actor's manliness triggered the nasty fallout between him and his equally volatile director—or can it? It's an open secret that the very married director prefers to work with actors who just happen to be anatomically prodigious below the beltline (check his credits!). Somehow, though, when the director hired this actor, he was *hugely* misinformed. Once shooting began, the *hugely* disappointed director rode the star, criticizing and even often bellowing out a single line of direction after each take—"*Bigger!*"—which provoked barely suppressed hilarity from those in the know.**

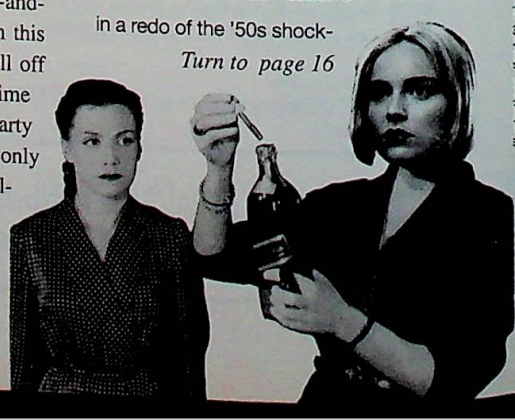
family plot Neighbors of this very wed star loved the elaborate landscaping he lavished on his estate while his actress-wife was out of town making movies. All of it was the handiwork of a handsome landscape architect. But the neighbors grew curious when, soon after the work was completed, the star hired laborers to yank out the whole shebang, only to begin all over again with, yep, the *same* landscape architect. This confused the curious till it was noted that the landscaper's car started to sit, overnight, behind the gates of the estate. Now that the grounds are manicured to perfection, isn't the star the proud owner of a mammoth-sized getaway spot—one he's hired his fave landscape architect to redo?

family night **These rugged young male co-stars were extremely intimate during the shooting of their new movie, so the crew was very curious about how the two would handle the big dinner bash to celebrate the end of shooting. What happened? One star showed up with his wife on his arm, while the other had a rent-a-starlet on his. Both guys greeted each other coolly—and then never, ever spoke to each other again. Sound surprising? Nah. It's just a replay of what happened a couple of years ago when one of the very same stars carried on a torrid relationship with the leading lady of their hit movie, but cut her off dead the day the shooting stopped.**

family business Given the kind of pills-and-booze household she grew up in, it came as no real surprise when this celebrity—having already milked her sobriety to the absolute max—fell off the wagon just as soon as her marriage fell apart. As if making up for lost time spent trying to be a happy homemaker, this lass has once again become the party animal of yore, though she *is* smart enough to not go wild in public places. Not only has she been sleeping around, she even passed along one find—a supremely well-endowed balladeer—to her new pal, that sexually voracious TV-and-sometimes-movie star who wasn't whistling Dixie when she threw off her Miss Prim image a while back.

once more, with feeling Hollywood seems to be searching further and further afield for remake material. **Disney**'s **Touchstone** just paid an unlikely $1 million-plus for rights to *Ransom*, an old **MGM** flick and "Saturday Night at the Movies" staple in which **Glenn Ford** and **Donna Reed** tough it out with the kidnappers of their son. **Sharon Stone** seemed, to *Ink*, ideal casting for the role previously played by **Simone Signoret** and **Tuesday Weld**—the dame who helps a fellow schoolmarm drown her wretched husband—in a redo of the '50s shock-

Turn to page 16



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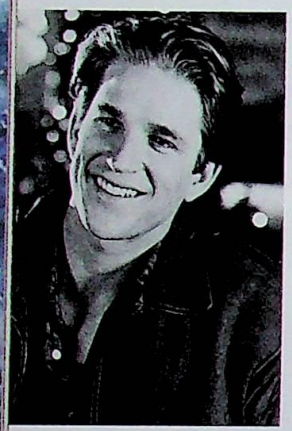
Hollywood ink

Continued from page 14

er *Diabolique*, but she's out. Will **Annette Bening** step in? Who knows why, but **Frank Marshall** and **Kathleen Kennedy** plan to update cult director **Edgar Ulmer**'s *American Matchmaker*, about an immigrant who finds mates for others but can't find one for himself. A more obvious subject is Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which they plan to give a *Beauty and the Beast*-ish spin to, twice: first as a live-action film with **Gérard Depardieu**, then as an animated pic with the voices of **Demi Moore** and **Tom Hulce**. **TNT** hopes to beat Disney with a *Hunchback* of their own—and though TNT hasn't asked, *Ink* would love to see **Mickey Rourke** play Quasimodo.



queen's logic

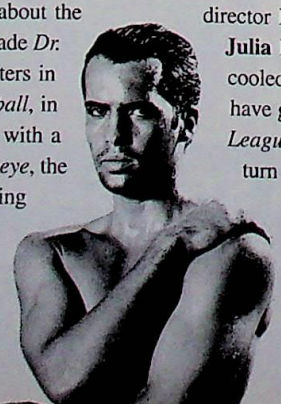
Likable **Tom Hanks**, who cadged a Best Actor Oscar for the oh-so-noble hit *Philadelphia*, has turned playing gay—once considered career suicide—into a great career move. *Provided* that the actor plays a noble bore with AIDS or a flaming drag queen, that is. Witness former '60s glamourboy **Terence Stamp** making a splashy comeback in *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, which is sort of a feather-boas-and-mincing-bon-mots sneak preview of the **Steven Spielberg**-produced *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*. The latter comedy will feature the high hairdos and the high-heeled prancing of a till-now-utterly-humorless trio: **Wesley Snipes**, **John Leguizamo** and **Patrick Swayze**. (And speaking of radical career transformations, how about hunky **Adrian Pasdar** playing the cross-dressing boyfriend of **Julie Walters** in *Just Like a Woman*?) Not surprising, then, that director **Mike Nichols** had no trouble attracting stars for **United Artists**' *La Cage aux Folles* remake of the formulaic French farce, about a middle-aged gay couple—one of whom is a drag star—who butch it up so as to not scare off their son's uptight fiancée and family. **Robin Williams**, who once wanted to play slain San Francisco gay-rights champ **Harvey Milk**—a movie about a gay *hero* that studios seem in no hurry to make—is likely to co-star in *Folles* with **Nathan Lane**. Since both Williams and Lane can sing (Williams wowed us with his *Aladdin* vocals, and Lane was a show-stopper in the recent Big Apple revival of *Guys and Dolls*), why isn't Nichols instead bringing to the screen **Jerry Herman**'s long-running Broadway *musical* version of *La Cage aux Folles*? *Ink* hears that years ago, Nichols, working with **Tommy Tune**, tried—but failed—to mount his own tuneful adaptation of *Folles*; thus, the story goes, Nichols has no great love for Herman's show, which succeeded where he did not. Meanwhile, filmmaker **John Schlesinger** is said to be readying his long-in-the-works, politically correct AIDS and intolerance drama, *Midday Moon*, and **Barbra Streisand** her *The Normal Heart* whenever the right script, studio and casting come on-line. And, yes, **Robert Altman** still plans to bring *Angels in America* to your local plex.

girl talk **Every nanosecond or so, Hollywood gets all hot and bothered about a "new" doll. You know, one instant it's Rosanna Arquette, then, a couple of movie missteps later—*poof!*—it's Patricia Arquette. With Michelle, Sharon, Julia, Geena and Demi booked *and* costly, lots of new girls are getting their shot. Julie Delpy—an odd flavor-of-the-month because she can *act*—seems to be up for everything and, while she didn't land *Sabrina*, that may *help* her career. Sandra Bullock came out of practically nowhere (what else would *you* call *Demolition Man*?), caught people's eye in *Speed*, and is already drawing million-dollar salaries for Disney's *While You Were Sleeping*, Miramax's *Kate and Leopold* and Morgan Creek's *Two If By Sea* with Denis Leary. Coming on strong: the ingénue from the PBS mini "Tales of the City," Laura Linney, who grabbed the top spot in Paramount's *Congo*, which the studio hopes is next summer's *Jurassic Park*.**

boy talk **It looks like the graying and thickening of Harrison, Mel, Kevin, Michael, Warren, Clint and Jack—combined with the huge success of Keanu Reeves in *Speed*—is finally giving breaks to younger guys not named Tom or Brad. Billy Zane landed the lead in Joe Dante's *The Phantom*; Campbell Scott will star in *Let It Be Me*; Dermot Mulroney will co-star in *Destiny Turns On the Radio*; and Dylan Walsh won that sought-after starring part in *Congo*. Surprisingly, Matthew Modine, who despite years of trying has never carried a hit, replaced Michael Douglas opposite Geena Davis in the pirate pic *Cutthroat Island*. But *nothing* tops the news that Paramount's given some $2 million to David Caruso, the over-hyped, carrot-topped TV actor totally unproven in films, to star in their sex thriller *Jade*.**

this and that

Big bombs are back. No, we're *not* talking about *I Love Trouble* and *Rapa Nui*; we're talking about the return of thrillers featuring all that cool warhead stuff that made *Dr. Strangelove*, *Fail-Safe* and *Seven Days in May* such nail-biters in the '60s. **Sidney Lumet** plans to direct *Man With the Football*, in which a U.S. special-weapons-unit stud plays mind games with a scientist threatening to nuke Washington D.C., while *Goldeneye*, the next 007 romp, pits **Pierce Brosnan** against villains threatening nuclear destruction. If **Paramount** decides to film **Tom Clancy**'s latest Jack Ryan bestseller, *Debt of Honor*, the plot has the Japanese bringing the U.S. to its knees with baddies threatening—right!—nuclear strikes . . . *Shakespeare in Love*, director **Ed Zwick**'s project meant to team **Daniel Day-Lewis** and **Julia Roberts**—till **Universal** balked at the budget and the stars cooled—may heat up with **Kenneth Branagh** at **Fox** . . . Who'd have guessed that recent flop sport-pics like *Blue Chips*, *Little Big League* and *Angels in the Outfield* would inspire filmmakers to turn to an even *duller* sport next? **Ron Shelton** will produce a flick with a golfing backdrop, and **Jake Eberts**'s **Lightmotive** company may film **Steven Pressfield**'s novel *Bagger Vance*, about a white golfer's friendship with his black caddy. Zzzz.



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Susan Sarandon

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hype

Yule-tied

About halfway through my interview with actress **Valeria Golino**, she says, "I'm trying to make sure that you think I'm smart and have morals and whatever, but then what I say is going to run next to a picture of me in high heels and a bra. It's so ridiculous—the messages are from two different people."

Golino's been in the movie business long enough to know how important image-shaping is; she has made nearly a dozen films since her big splash in 1988's *Rain Man*, and will next star opposite Gary Oldman in *Immortal Beloved*, a film which she describes as "kind of like 'The Dating Game' but with classical music." What we really want to know, though, is what Golino thinks of her male co-stars—in other words, what would she plant for them under their Christmas trees, given the chance? Tom Cruise (*Rain Man*): "A Monet painting because I know he likes the artist, even though I'm sure he could buy one for himself." Charlie Sheen (*Hot Shots!*): "A Fiat Cinquecento. He has so many cars but Fiats are the most beautiful cars in the world." Gary Oldman: "A movie camera—he'd be a great director." Paul Reubens (*Big Top Pee-wee*): "I'm really very fond of him. I'd give him a big leather bag and inside I would put two books, three apples, one tie, a doll that talks—but not his own—and all kinds of little messages. He would keep opening things and never finish." She pauses then jumps in again, "Oh, and I'd put in the bra I wore for this picture and he can do whatever he wants with it. No questions asked."

Dennis Hensley

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Back in March, we announced a change in the rules of our annual "Oscar Ahoy!" contest so that readers would feel they had a shot to shine alongside the ever-clever "Ahoy!" winner Nettie Hansen. We were surprised that Ms. Hansen herself agreed it was time to pass along the scepter and tiara: "I can't be the only one who loves your magazine *and* has a personality disorder," she observed, accurately. Even so, she effortlessly copped two of the 10 *Movieline* T-shirts awarded for ace drollery. To those of you who failed to score, we say: sharpen your pencils and your wit, as the next "Oscar Ahoy!" contest will appear in our March '95 issue. *The Editors*

Oscar Ahoy!

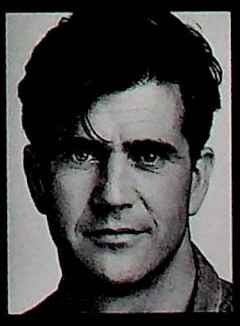
1. Which film was so depressing it didn't deserve the Oscar nominations it got? "And the nominees: a dying lawyer with AIDS, one man falsely accused of murder and on the run, one man falsely accused of murder and in prison, an emotionally repressed man, a verbally repressed woman, domestic violence, and a black-and-white film with the all-time highest body count of six million. Depressed? Hey who's . . . BANG!"—Judy Erbskorn, Canoga Park, CA. ■ **2. Who this year was clearly in need of emergency grooming?** "Geena Davis and Renny Harlin. Are they holding out for that special 2-for-1 wash-and-curl special at José Eber?"—Jennifer Watson, Vernon Hills, IL. ■ **3. Which Best Actress nominations were for performances in films few people would be forcibly dragged to?** "The Best Actress film that most people would have to be dragged to is *The Piano*. You could save $7.50 by just watching a woman with PMS do the same thing."—Marianne Meador, Indianapolis, IN. ■ **4. Who this year clearly didn't belong on the stage, and why?** "Last year's still-inconceivable winner Marisa Tomei triumphantly strode the length of the stage, her body positively arched with hubris, and all across the world viewers were confusedly whispering, 'Who's that woman not wearing a bra?'"—Nettie Hansen, Amherst, NY. ■ **5. What unlikely award this year came through strange machinations?** "The Best Supporting Actress Oscar contest has to be rigged. How else can you explain Anna Paquin? She's got an annoying voice, she's, what, 11 years old, she showed up on Oscar night wearing a beaded purse on her head, *and* she's in a movie that's so far out of the Hollywood mainstream that it might as well be set in New Zealand or someplace."—Tom Casey, Portland, IN. ■ **6. Who drove you away from the TV this year?** "My definition of hell is: 1. Sitting in one's chair being unable to avoid a cloying love song; 2. Old movie footage of Lassie, Asta, et al.; 3. Dolly Parton's dress struggling to contain her, um, enthusiasm; 4. Live animals scripted to listlessly sniff at the footlights."—Nettie Hansen, Amherst, NY. ■ **7. Whose outfit this year defied rational explanation?** "Can we retroactively revoke Sally Kirkland's Oscar nomination? Her plunging red gown primally screamed, 'What am I doing on this body?' Academy, next year, don't let Sally within a mile of the Oscars."—Dean Anderson, New York, NY. ■ **8. Which coupled presenters do you believe had never spoken to each other before the Oscars and will never speak to each other again, and what gave it away?** "Nicole Kidman and Christian Slater. Was it a subtle joke that only I caught, or did other people realize the irony of Nic towering over Christian while giving the award for Best Documentary *Short Subject*?"—Rob A. Seide, Baltimore, MD. ■ **9. What bombastic Hollywood figure was thankfully absent from the proceedings this year?** "Dustin Hoffman. Anytime he's absent it's an occasion for thanks."—L.A. Jackson, Los Angeles, CA. ■ **10. Last year Richard Gere brought his Tibetan concerns to the Oscars, and Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon took the opportunity to champion HIV positive Haitians. Who this year came with an added agenda that made you want to slap them?** "As far as added agendas go, Mrs. Steven Spielberg left all would-be politicians in her dust, as she appeared to go instead for Wife of the Year award. The former Kate Capshaw did it all: she laughed and snuggled up to Steven whenever a *Schindler's* joke was made; she leaned against him to get in the picture whenever the cameras focused on him; she grabbed his head and wrenched it around so hard to kiss him when he won Best Director that I was worried he'd have whiplash; I was surprised she didn't pull Steven's mother onto her lap and give her a big hug. Why did she put more effort into this performance than all her films combined? Maybe she thought Amy Irving was watching at home. Regardless, Steven did the only classy thing possible: he *ignored* her."—John Taylor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Where to go to see movie stars spend more money than you've got.

Seeing Stars

With just a few holiday shopping weeks left, the mall-based toy store **Imaginarium** is a frequent destination for celebrity parents. In the Santa Monica store, **Ted Danson** was seen browsing in the science section and **Sean Penn** scanned the little-kid aisles. The Century City store found **Jack Lemmon** and his granddaughter picking out toy computers, **Michael J. Fox** and his son looking at rock and mineral kits, **Meryl Streep** buying a toy castle and **Sally Field** purchasing several activity boxes. The always generous **Bruce Springsteen** bought shovelsful of items to give to children in a hospital, while the always, uh, kid-loving **Michael Jackson** has purchased buckets of books and toys here for his own charitable purposes. ■ Sunset Boulevard's **House of Blues** is one of 1994's hot spots for celebrity gift-shopping. **Bill Murray** and **Tori Spelling** both recently bought varsity jackets there, and **Jack Nicholson** purchased lighters and Blues Brothers T-shirts. Then there are the mass shoppers: "Models Inc.'s" **Linda Gray** bought 40 T-shirts for a grandchild's birthday party, and **Dustin Hoffman** held his son's bar mitzvah party in the club, and gave all the kids denim shirts and gift bags. ■ Now that Hollywood types have given up drinks and pills in favor of *natural, healthy* drinks and pills, you'll often see stars ingesting exotic substances from the **Tea Garden Herbal Emporiums** in Venice and West Hollywood. **Ben Vereen** recuperated from being hit by a car two years ago with such products as "Gecko Power Plus," which features generous amounts of lizard spine and tail. When **Carol Channing** injured her foot recently, she took a healing potion made from rubber-tree bark. How does **Daryl Hannah** keep her skin looking so pearly? With a concoction of, yes, ground pearls. **Jason Scott Lee** took a "protective energy" combination with him to stay healthy on a location shoot in India this summer. To keep focused and alert while making their recent album, the substance-friendly **Rolling Stones** used herbs and deer antler tips. And **Mel Gibson** likes herbs so much (he even hands them out to the crew when he's filming) that they've named a strong ginseng and deer-antler-tips drink after him, calling it "Mel's Punch." More gecko, Mel?

Ben Kallen



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Kiss and Tell

When actor **Peter Riegert** was first starting out in the New York improvisation group War Babies, he'd try any part bestowed upon him by loudmouthed audience members.

"I broke the metatarsal bone on my left foot," he recalls, "playing a *pretzel*."

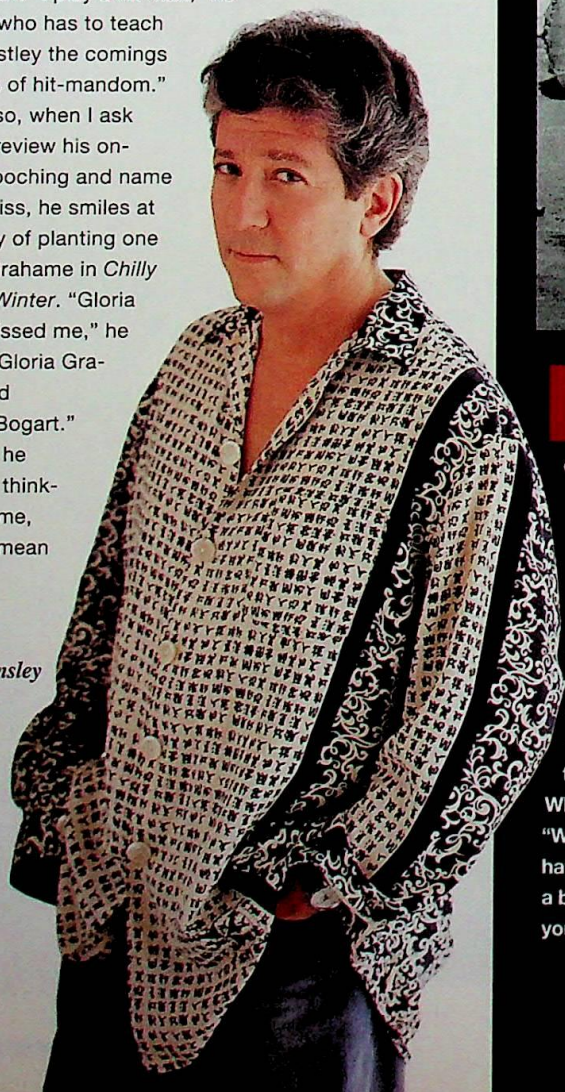
"At least you were low in fat," I offer.

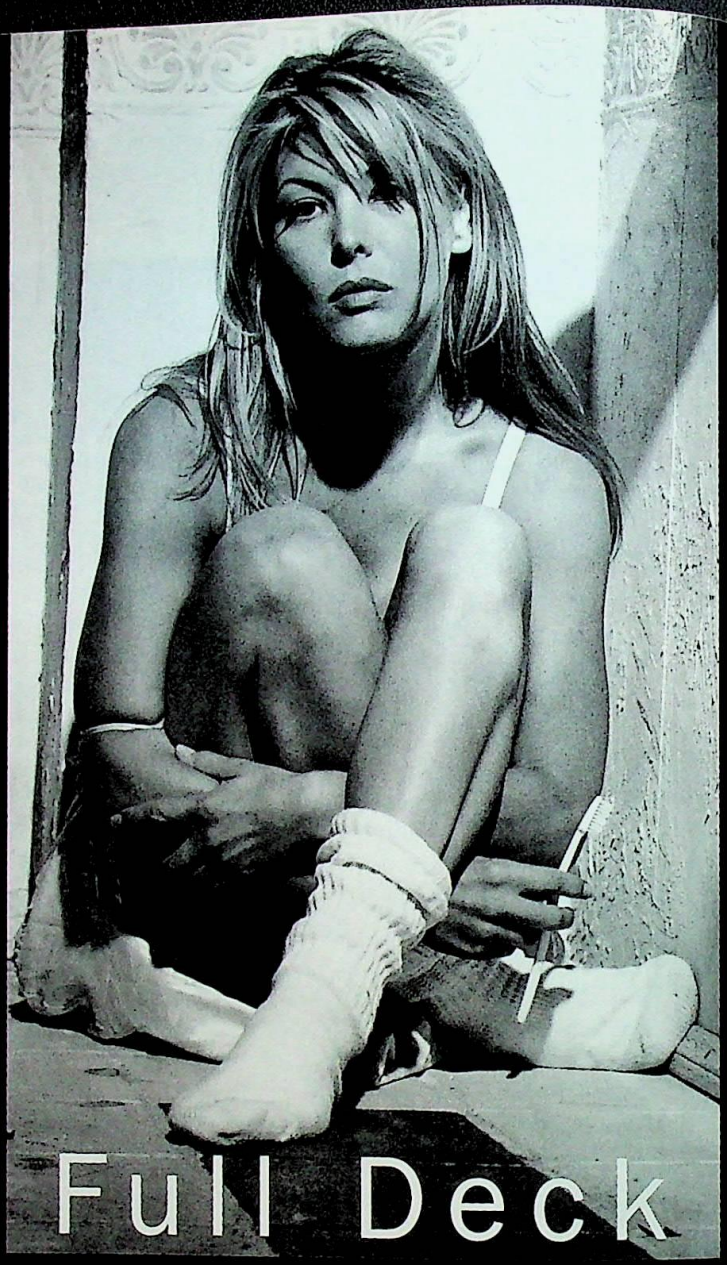
"I was unsalted as well."

The roles have gotten considerably fatter since those early days—he's played everything from an American oil man in Scotland (*Local Hero*) to a Jim Carrey-chasing gumshoe (*The Mask*)—yet despite making Amy Irving swoon in *Crossing Delancey* and playing the lover of his one-time real-life-lover Bette Midler in *Gypsy*, he rarely gets to play the guy who gets the girl. In his new black comedy *Coldblooded*, Riegert is again on less-than-romantic turf. "I play a hit man," he explains, "who has to teach Jason Priestley the comings and goings of hit-mandom."

Even so, when I ask Riegert to review his on-screen smooching and name a favorite kiss, he smiles at the memory of planting one on Gloria Grahame in *Chilly Scenes of Winter*. "Gloria Grahame kissed me," he says, "and Gloria Grahame kissed Humphrey Bogart." He tells me he remembers thinking at the time, "Does that mean *I* kissed Humphrey Bogart?"

Dennis Hensley





Full Deck

In many an unforgivably crackbrained movie, there's a smoking performance that leaves the rest of the cast in the ashes. Such is the case with **Deborah Unger**, who delivered a knock-'em-dead turn as the sex-obsessed hussy who strips and pants for her (female) psychiatrist in 1992's *Whispers in the Dark*, so it comes as a surprise that *Whispers* was her last big-screen film. "I may not be able to control what cards get dealt me, but I certainly figure out how to play what I have. Maybe I'll get a difficult hand, but I'm not afraid to play the game. After all, it's just a game."

Unger is back in the game with *Highlander III: The Sorcerer*, opposite Christopher Lambert. Although I'd rather see her in a role she was meant for—that of a noirish looker who manipulates men like they were string puppets—she does get to play two different roles in *Highlander*: the first is a British woman from the 18th century who falls for Lambert, and the second is a research scientist who meets up with him in present day. When I ask Unger to share a tale or two about the production, she volleys, "Why don't you just print one of your favorite stories and delete whatever I have to say—who's gonna give a shit anyway?" I see. Well, then, how about a brief self-description? Unger gets right to the point: "I'm a bit of an onion—you can peel me for a long time."

Jonathan Cutler

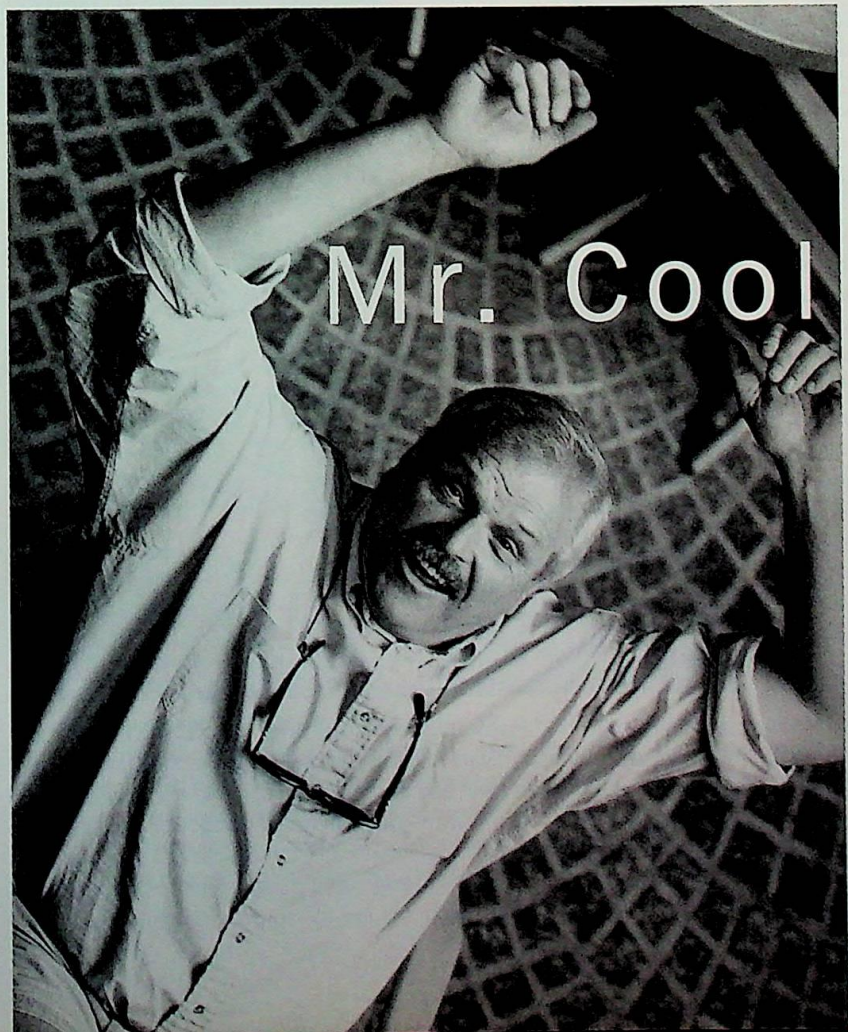
hype

Brian Dennehy has his head on straighter than any actor I've ever met. He says exactly what's on his mind. Clearly, in a lengthy career that's seen him play everything from a cuddly alien (*Cocoon*) to a real-life serial killer (John Wayne Gacy in *To Catch a Killer*), he's learned to suffer fools not at all.

"There are two interesting things about show business," Dennehy tells me. "One's the *work*, and the other's the *money*. The rest is all bullshit." Dennehy is not hurting for work, having just signed on to play Chris Farley's father in *Tommy Boy*, after wrapping a role opposite Robert Duvall in the upcoming *The Stars Fell on Henrietta*. He also recently made his directorial debut with a TV film he starred in, *Jack Reed: A Search for Justice*, about which he admits, "Sure, I'd like to direct a feature, but so would 15,000 other people in this town." Dennehy seems not to be hurting for money, either, judging from his decision to move his family to Santa Fe to get away from what he calls "the poisons in this business." Living in Tinseltown is, he says, "a ridiculous way to spend your life—worrying about whether you'll have the best table or be invited to the right party."

Though Dennehy seems virtually unflappable, he concedes, when pressed, that there is one thing that has frightened him: watching *Jurassic Park*. "It was an important movie to see because of the implications of what a computer can now do to an actor. It's just a matter of time before Tracy, Bogart, and Laurel and Hardy can all be back at work in show biz—just as lifelike and real as they ever were, at least on-screen. As an actor," he explains, "I think *that's* scary, because unlike living performers, Bogart and Cagney aren't going to ask for residuals or points!"

Kevin Hennessey



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LIMITED EDITION

Gérard Depardieu may be a great actor, but Paul Chutkow's book about him is sycophantic claptrap.

Liberté, Égalité, Stupidité

Zee French are zee very interesting people, *n'est-ce pas*? But sometimes, when *les américains* write about *les français*, what they write is, *comment dit-on*? not *si bon*. Sometimes what they write stinks like *la poubelle* (the trash can), stinks like *la vespasienne* (the public urinal), stinks like *la merde* (the crap).

Paul Chutkow, a veteran foreign correspondent and French film buff, has just published a book about Gérard Depardieu, the greatest living French actor, ***Depardieu: A Biography*** (Knopf, 351 pp., $24.00). Take it from me: *Ça pue* (It stinks). It stinks because the obsequiously servile Chutkow has *une tendance* to describe Depardieu as "the wild child with a heart as big as the Arc de Triomphe." It stinks because Chutkow writes sentences like "Watching Depardieu act, even in a small role, is like watching a Bastille Day fireworks display. On camera, he bursts, he explodes, he erupts with unexpected colors." It stinks because Chutkow does not know that *1492: Conquest of Paradise* stinks. It stinks because Chutkow constantly writes things like: "*Snnff. Snnff*. Smell that, Jeannot? *Remarquable!*" And it stinks because Chutkow spends pages upon pages describing the jumbo-sized French movie star's search for the perfect chicken, one more chicken he obviously does not need to eat.

France is the land of good cheese and bad philosophy, so it is probably inevitable that an American journalist who spends several years researching a French movie star's life will ultimately emerge with a river of hooey as big as the Loire. Yet, even by the standards of *les maîtres d'hooey*, Chutkow takes *le gâteau*. Listen to this pile of flapdoodle:

"In Jung's view, artists are mediums and go-betweens through whom various social and psychological pressures surge and subside. In 'The Spirit of Man, Art, and Literature,' Jung writes that art and artists often serve their respective cultures and epochs in ways that are veiled, or not immediately understood: 'Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present.' It is through art and artists, Jung writes, that we are able 'to find our way back to the deepest springs of life.'"

This particular passage happens to occur in a chapter delineating the heretofore hidden philosophical nuances of the 1991 Franco-Aussie comedy *Green Card* (*Carte Verte*), which, the last time I checked, still starred Andie MacDowell, she of the big teeth and the small talent. It is to my knowledge, the only time that the works of Andie MacDowell and Carl Jung have been linked in the same paragraph, and with five years left to go in this ghastly century it raises the horrifying possibility that we might yet live to see Drew Barrymore and René

Descartes connected in the same sentence. It's been that kind of millennium.

I do not intend any of the foregoing to be construed as a slap against Depardieu himself. Depardieu is as talented an actor as can be found anywhere on the planet. In films as varied as *Les Valseuses*, *Le Dernier Métro*, *Jean de Florette*, *Danton*, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and *Trop Belle pour Toi*, the man with Nick Nolte's *48 Hours* body and Robert De Niro's *Raging Bull* talent has proven himself to be a master of every conceivable dramatic and comedic role. Unfortunately, his American biographer hooked up with Depardieu when he was trying to make his U.S. breakthrough, and allowed his awe for his subject to mar his critical faculties. *1492* was a bust from Jump Street, a cynical attempt by Hollywood to capitalize on a Christopher Columbus boom that never materialized. *Cyrano de Bergerac* was French corn (*le maïs*): a bloated production of a sappy 19th century play that was 200 years behind the times when it was first written. And *Green Card* was a so-so piece of froth that expected the viewing public to shed crocodile tears for a couple whose love affair is seemingly doomed because the man is getting deported to France. Attention, Peter Weir: Getting shipped back to France is not like getting shipped back to Haiti.

So, when Chutkow writes: "How ironic it is that in a post-industrial era which prizes the rational over intuition and money over artistic inspiration, actors, writers, and directors in Paris and New York, in Australia and Hollywood, now take lessons in creativity from the Prankster from La France Profonde, that timeless, mystical realm so impoverished by today's standards of cultural and economic wealth, yet which was once so rich in primitive folklore, superstition, and myth," we can feel perfectly safe in declaring, "Mister Chutkow, you are full of it."

The very worst part of *Depardieu* is the labyrinthine chapter in which Chutkow attempts to sort out the mystery of Depardieu, Child Rapist. In a 35-page chapter that seems to go on for 35 years, Chutkow analyzes Depardieu's use of the word "*assister*" in an interview with a *Time* magazine stringer in which the actor allegedly claimed to have participated in a rape at age nine. Chutkow points out that *assister* has two meanings: to participate in, or to witness. In other words, the nine-year-old Depardieu may have merely been a spectator at a rape, or at a series of rapes, but not an active participant in them. Oh, that's okay then.

Crack reporter that he is, Chutkow also goes back to a *Film Comment* interview in 1978, in which Depardieu's childhood sexual experiences were first discussed, and argues that at the time of the putative rape, he could not have been nine, but must have been at least 14. *Hey, give the kid a break.* Hopefully, the author will now turn his attention to the life of River Phoenix, and clear up all those misunderstandings about the chemicals that were in his body the night he died. Maybe it was simply an allergic reaction to aspirin. Chutkow is, to put it simply, a movie publicist's best friend. *N'est-ce pas*?

Joe Queenan

joan vass

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Hatched

Audiences know **Teri Hatcher** as TV's Lois Lane, the career girl with the traffic-stopping good looks and whiplash comments that level even the most menacing office jerk. But now she's dropping the good girl act to go bad on the big screen, as Alec Baldwin's nemesis in *Heaven's Prisoners*. "People will be surprised when they see me in *Prisoners*," she says. "My character's a destructive and evil woman—I actually got to scream 'Fuck you!' at Alec, which took a lot of energy."

Although Hatcher's name is traveling around Hollywood faster than a speeding bullet, she has not risen to the top in a single bound; she's been in the business for 10 years already and has been floating in bimboland for a lot of them, most notably as the self-obsessed starlet in *The Big Picture*. "Before Lois, people would have described me as sexy and built, whereas people now see me as sassy and smart, which is nice for a change."

As far as strange characters go, Eric Roberts, who plays Hatcher's husband in *Prisoners*, is one of the more out-there actors in Hollywood. What was it like working with him? "At one point he told me I was incredible, which I thought was great because he's a snob in a way." Yes, but wasn't she apprehensive about having to come off as *scarier* than Roberts? "Well, when I first heard he was in the picture I felt I had to rise to the occasion. I thought, 'Here's a challenge—I have to out-psycho Eric Roberts! Nobody's gonna expect me to pull that off!'"

Heidi Parker

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Greta Garbo in *As You Desire Me (1932)*

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Although Hollywood luminaries are flocking to Remi's restaurant in Santa Monica, the real hot spot is their star-studded cigar club, which welcomes Tinseltown's newly chic vice.

Where There's Smoke...

Cigars have always been a part of Hollywood's iconography. The cigar-chomping movie mogul is an enduring cliché. And can you imagine Groucho or George Burns without their trademark stogies? These days, a fine smoke remains many a comedian's most beloved offscreen prop, from Cosby to David Letterman. Arnold Schwarzenegger is fond of showing up at press conferences with a *verboten* Cuban Romeo y Julieta. And then there's Madonna, who graced the "Late Show" spewing fine smoke and foul expletives. Whatta woman.

Yet all of this does not quite explain the cigar-mania that has been sweeping Hollywood in recent months. These days, if you attend a premiere or an industry party, or visit the hot night spot of the moment, you're likely to encounter trendoids boldly puffing away on the fat, expensive products of Cuba, Jamaica or the Dominican Republic—an act that, only a couple of years ago, would have elicited, at best, sneers and insults. It's all the more inexplicable, given that the laws governing smoking in Los Angeles, not to mention the rest of the country, are becoming increasingly stringent. Except at **Remi**.

Located on Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade, Remi is one of the best Venetian restaurants in the city. Over the last five years, it's established a steady clientele, which includes such luminaries as Michelle Pfeiffer and Steven Spielberg, who prefer the low-key atmosphere. But a more offbeat celeb crowd can be found in the wine room where, once a month, co-owner/managing partner Jivan Tabibian hosts Les Amis du Cigare, a prix fixe evening of fine food, wine and cigars for a group of about 12. The evening I attended, the tobaccophile crowd consisted of doctors, lawyers, business execs and a couple film types.

NOTHING ATTRACTS LIKE THE IM

CORIANDER SEEDS FROM MOROCCO ANGELICA ROOT FROM SAXONY JUNIPER BERRIES FROM ITALY CASSIA BARK FROM INDOCH

by joshua mooney

The food, wine and cigars were exquisite, and the conversation was of the first water. Tabibian insisted only that we avoid any low, crude or scandalous topics, and so, of course, O.J. was right out. Instead, the banter ranged from politics, baseball and travel to Draconian smoking measures and the finer things in life, including, naturally, cigars.

Later, I caught up with the flamboyant, erudite Tabibian to get his take on this hot Hollywood trend. "Ninety percent of it is bandwagon effect," the long-time smoker said bluntly. "Hollywood has never been known for its originality. They are not trendsetters, but followers. You have to look at this phenomenon as a trend, and like all trends in America, it doesn't imply a structural change. It's dependent on visibility and marketing. Look at Range Rovers," he says, citing another instant status symbol. "Do you think a Range Rover makes sense in the middle of Bel Air?" Cigar-loving celebs don't visit as often as you might think, says Tabibian. "Celebrities require a larger audience," he says with a laugh. "In this kind of intimate audience, they somehow don't shine as well, because ultimately in two minutes everybody forgets who they are."

Not that he's cynical about the cigar renaissance, Tabibian is quick to add, since all the attention can't help but raise the image of the much-maligned stogie. "In American folklore, cigars have always been associated with arrogance and affluence. Whenever journalists write about some wrongdoer, they always mention that the guy wears $1800 suits, drives a Cadillac or a Ferrari, and smokes six-dollar cigars."

I unwrapped a Cuban cigar that I was given by one of the clubgoers a couple weeks later. I'd been waiting for just the right moment to smoke it. Naturally, an actress gave me my cue, exiting too quickly off the stage of my life. In Hollywood as elsewhere, I mused, savoring the robust taste, a woman is a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke.

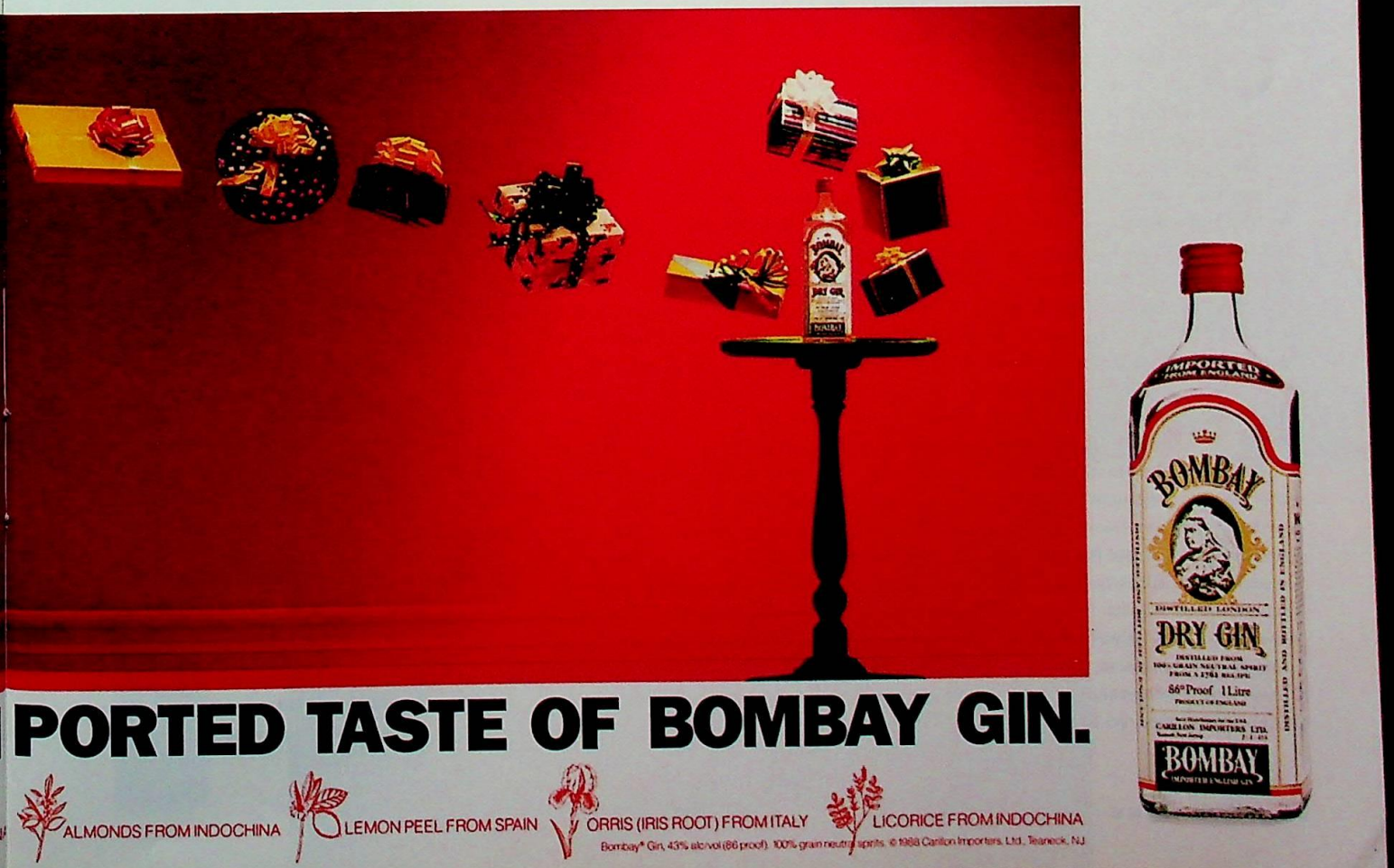
Dress Extras

Remi

Seymour Cassell, *It Could Happen to Him* **Milton Berle**, *a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Man*

Michael Nouri, Flashdance *in the pan*

Andrew Vagna, *ex-Carolco player*



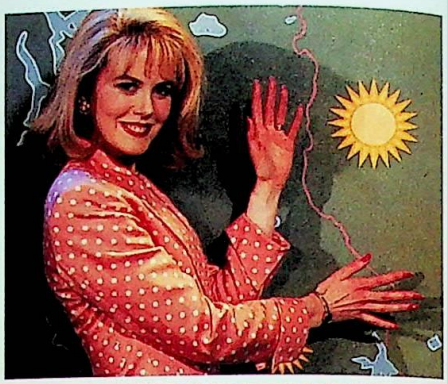
Casting about

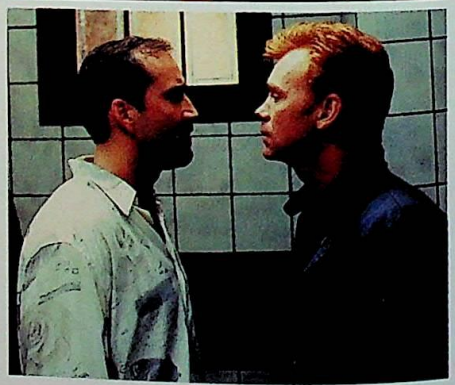
by yvette mason

Second things first: While Hollywood buzzed about who would be the lucky gal to star opposite **Harrison Ford** in the touted remake of the beloved '50s froth *Sabrina*, savvy insiders were pointing out how preposterously ass-backwards the whole project was going—this film is, after all, not called *Sabrina's Boyfriends*. The original *Sabrina* took off not on the casting of **Humphrey Bogart** or **William Holden**, but solely on the magic of a unique, megawatt ingénue named **Audrey Hepburn**. So, it's not like you've got a hot project simply because Ford wants to be in this film; whether you go back to the earlier movie or the play on which it is based, the story demands that you have a *really* special girl. And you'd have a tall order filling Hepburn's shoes in any case, but with the shocking paucity of spectacular young actresses, it'd be easier to try solving the health care crisis. Once you don't have **Julia Roberts** or **Winona Ryder**, who the hell do you have? Oh boy, let's find the next Hepburn, that'll be fun—she's gotta be out there somewhere in one of those Generation X pieces of shit, right? After passing on such knee-slappingly ill-considered options as **Juliette Binoche** (so fresh after having her head banged on the floor by **Jeremy Irons** in the pseudo-arty smutfest *Damage*), perhaps it seemed a great idea to cast untainted up-and-comer **Julia Ormond**, who's playing the part of Guinevere opposite **Richard Gere** in the now-filming *First Knight*. We can be sure she tested well with Harrison, but that's not the same as being the next Audrey, and anyone who's seen Ormond's performance in the upcoming saga *Legends of the Fall* can testify that while she's good, she is by no means magical. In view of all this, the newest rumor that the filmmakers have been trying to lure **Tom Cruise** to play the other boyfriend becomes a mordant commentary on Hollywood's current philosophy of how to cast/sell movies, even movies *about* women.

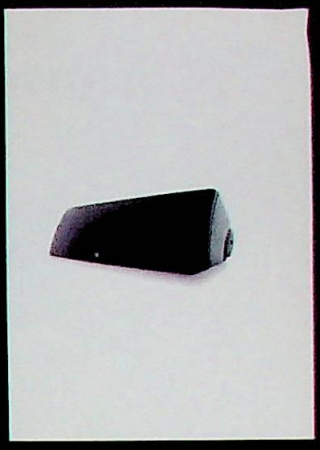
Leading lady blues?: The last time Robert Redford couldn't find the leading lady of his choice, an expensive project (*Crisis in the Hot Zone*) went down the tubes. Has it happened again? The movie this time is Rob Reiner's *The American President*; the leading lady role of an environmental lobbyist who gets romantically involved with a widowed President was shunned by both Emma Thompson and Michelle Pfeiffer before Redford unhitched himself from the project. The official insider explanation for the exit was that Reiner and Redford disagreed about the political aspect of the story, which is funny since both of these filmmakers are predictable Hollywood liberals—it's not like one of them decided to throw his weight behind a capital-gains tax cut and make that the issue *President* turns on. Since the project has been in Redford's production company's hands for a decade, the question is: What did *A Few Good Men* playwright Aaron Sorkin do to the script when Reiner hired him for the rewrite? Given Redford's fondness for playing fantastically lovable characters, perhaps the script's President—who crosses his principled ladylove by putting pragmatic politics ahead of her environmental concerns—turned out just a tad too pragmatic for Mr. Sundance's taste? Then again, maybe the basic problem was that no leading lady Redford wanted was willing to play the feisty lobbyist. Why? Well, maybe because the script has scenes like this one, in which the leading lady and her friend speak to a White House guard as follows: She: "Forgive me, this is my first time at the White House and I'm trying to savor the Capraesque quality." Her Friend: "He doesn't know what 'Capraesque' means." The Guard: "Yeah I do. Frank Capra, great American director. *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Meet John Doe*." After pulling out of two ready-to-roll big-budget productions, Redford immediately signed on for another one, *Up Close and Personal*, which, not incidentally, already has its leading lady, Michelle Pfeiffer, on board.

In character





What are they going to do next? (top to bottom): Nicole Kidman in Gus Van Sant's *To Die For*; Jeff Bridges playing *Wild Bill* to Ellen Barkin's Calamity Jane; Barbara Hershey and Tom Berenger goin' country in *Last of the Dogmen*; Nicolas Cage and David Caruso having a macho standoff in *Kiss of Death*.



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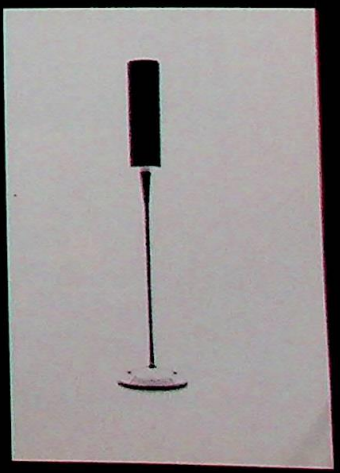

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by steve pond

Music For Murder

It was beauty that killed the beast, or so the man said. But it was Max Steiner that provided music for the whole mega-simian boondoggle—you know: *King Kong*—and in the process he not only revolutionized film scoring, he set a precedent: Scary movies have good music. Giving a composer a chance to get mysterious and spooky, it seems, has brought consistently cool results, from Bernard Herrmann's Hitchcock scores to Jerry Goldsmith's *The Omen* and Ennio Morricone's *Exorcist II: The Heretic*.

Some of the most beloved scores

belong to the charming but cheesy sci-fi/horror epics of the '50s. *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Forbidden Planet* and their ilk were scored with spacey music played on gloriously dumb instruments like the theremin, a bizarre contraption that made weird noises when you waved your hands over it. A delightful evocation of this era came recently with *Ed Wood*, both in Howard Shore's defiantly anachronistic score and in source music from such inspired cheese-whizzes as Perez Prado and Korla Pandit. In making you pine for an era you probably didn't even know you missed, director Tim Burton's attention to detail is truly mind-boggling—not only do the credits include "theremin solos," but the soloist has a slightly exotic, foreign-sounding name: Lidia Kavina. Uncanny.

These days, we can also add a whole new category to the scary-movie music archives: the music to movies with a '90s kind of horror, i.e. ultra-violence, nihilism, rampant bloodletting, and other evils that don't come from laboratories or swamps or sewers or Mars. Take *Killing Zoe*, a saga of brutality whose theatrical run preceded its soundtrack release by a couple of months. Arty musical technocrats Tom Hajdu and Andy Milburn, who call themselves tomandandy, and have also worked on stuff like the "Homicide" TV show and U2's Zooropa tour, have put together a collection of industrial noises and percussive themes as fascinating as they are jarring. Before the soundtrack dilutes its own impact with a couple of overly conventional songs, *Killing Zoe* is an assaultive, unsettling mess with an unstoppable pulse. If Satan were to host a rave—and who's to say he hasn't deejayed a few already?—this is the music he'd play.

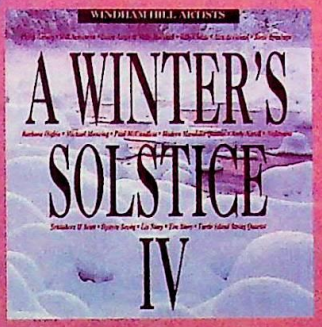
tomandandy, by the way, also had a hand in the soundtrack to *Natural Born Killers*, which may be old news but deserves a nod anyway, since it's one of the most deranged and audacious uses of movie music since Disney had the gall to rearrange "Rite of Spring." Nine Inch Nails overlord Trent Reznor followed the lead of Oliver Stone's movie and threw everything from L7 to Bob Dylan to Patsy Cline to Dr. Dre, plus dialogue and sound effects, into a violent, utterly demented soundscape. The album makes Peter Gabriel sound dangerous and Duane Eddy sound like a serial killer, and it gives Leonard Cohen a role he was born to play: As an eminently reasonable prophet of doom, Cohen surveys the house of horrors and intones, "And now the wheels of heaven stop/you feel the devil's riding crop/Get ready for the future:/it is murder." Murder with a damn good beat, though.

Stephanie Romanov (actress, "Models Inc."): "My favorite soundtrack would have to be *The Sound of Music*. I've watched this movie over and over ever since I was a little girl, so the songs always manage to make me feel happy, magical and very alive!"

Craig Chester (actor, *Swoon*, *Grief*): "I'm listening to *Music From the Films of Hal Hartley*. I've always admired Hal's ability to integrate music in his films without stooping to the typical MTV-isms of, say, *The Crow*. Besides, it's great housecleaning music."

Mitzi Kapture (actress, USA's "Silk Stalkings"): "I have two all-time favorite soundtracks. They are: *The Piano*, which I think is emotionally moving as well as disturbing, and *Somewhere In Time*, which is scored by John Barry and is just beautiful. It reminds me of a very romantic moment in my own life."

Winter Discoveries



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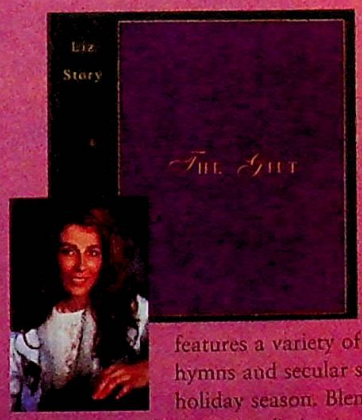
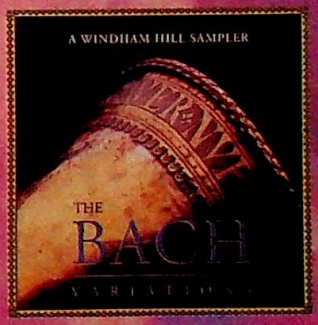


Pianist Liz Story teams up with bassist Joel DiBartolo to present an acoustic collection of Christmas duets. *The Gift* features a variety of traditional carols, hymns and secular standards of the holiday season. Blending classical and jazz with her own distinctive form of piano improvisation, Liz's latest album is destined to become a perennial favorite.



Of all the composers who ever set quill to parchment, or pen to paper, Johann Sebastian Bach was the ultimate "crossover" artist: his music has become a universal musical inheritance that continues to inspire musicians of every stripe. This special collection features 14 Bach interpretations by a variety of Windham Hill artists including Nightnoise, Alex de Grassi and Andy Narell.

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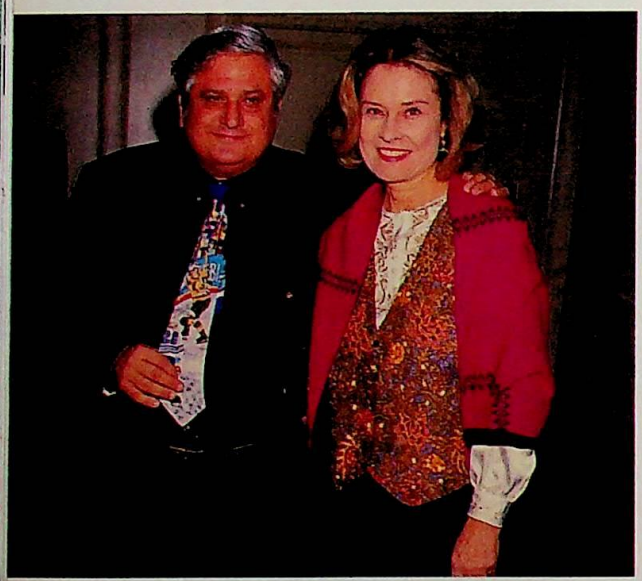
Michael Lerner: Q & A



From the streets of Brooklyn to Hollywood success with an Oscar nom for *Barton Fink*, Michael Lerner is one great guy! Here he's out on the town with pal Diane Baker.

1 HOLLYWOOD KIDS: What were you like as a kid? MICHAEL LERNER: [*Laughing*] Very sexy! I was a combination of jock and bookworm, and also a member of a Jewish gang. Many years later I was busted in Tijuana, but that's another story. **2 After you attended school, you moved to San Francisco to work at the American Conservatory Theater, right?** Yes, at A.C.T. I worked with Michael Learned, the mother on "The Waltons." **3 Was there any confusion over your similar names?** Yes. When my second movie, *The Candidate*, aired on TV around that time, "The Waltons" was so popular *TV Guide* promoted the film as "starring Robert Redford and Michael Learned." That pissed me off but then, in 1976, I got a job in *St. Ives* because Michael backed out. They were baffled over how to replace her, my name came up, and they rewrote her part—a lawyer—from female to male, and I was in. **4 What do you recall about *St. Ives* star Charles Bronson?** I had all the lines. He didn't have any, he didn't like lines. He said, "Hey, Lerner, you can talk!" **5 How'd you get your first film role, in Paul Mazursky's '70 movie *Alex in Wonderland*?** I came to L.A., landed a part in the West Coast premiere of Jules Feiffer's *Little Murders*, and everybody came to see it, so I started getting film work. **6 What sticks in your mind about *Wonderland*?** Paul Mazursky's partner, Larry Tucker, who was 400 pounds at least, would come to the set at lunch and have a fruit plate. I wondered why he was so heavy when he only ate a fruit plate, so one day Paul took me into Larry's office, opened his desk, and there were Baby Ruths, Peanut M&M's and Jujubes. [*Laughing*] I identified! Also, Gloria Grahame came to the set; she'd divorced filmmaker Nicholas Ray and married his son, Tony, who was the first A.D. on *Alex*. I'd gawk, she was so sexy. **7 What memories do you have about making the '77 hit *The Other Side of Midnight*?** Herve Villechaize lived in my building at the time, so I took French lessons from him for that film. A lot of people come up to me saying that's one of the best worst movies ever. **8 What's one thing that's always in your refrigerator?** Ketchup, and it's got to be Heinz. **9 How did you like working with Jack Nicholson on *The Postman Always Rings Twice*?** I learned a lot about acting from Jack. He's secure enough to let you dominate a scene. **10 What's the strangest thing that's ever happened to you on a film?** When I was playing Jack Ruby on *Four Days in Dallas*, a 1978 TV movie, I had to shoot Lee Harvey Oswald—Freddy Forrest—with my right hand. Because I'm left-handed, my right hand was unsteady, and I shot him in the arm with a blank. It was horrible. **11 Any films you wish you hadn't made?** *Movers and Shakers*. I was led to believe I'd have creative input into my character, but I didn't. **12 What do you recall about making the '87 movie *Anguish*?** I liked that film, it was very violent. I had managers at the time who insisted I not do it, so I fired them and did the movie. **13 How did your life change after you got an Oscar nomination for *Barton Fink*?** I was negotiating on another film when I got the nomination, and my price quadrupled. **14 What's your most vivid memory of such recent movies as *No Escape*, *The Road to Wellville*, *Radioland Murders* and *A Pyromaniac's Love Story*?** I was leaving *No Escape*, shot in the wilds of Australia, for two weeks, and a helicopter was going to pick me up and drop me where a car would take me to the airport. The helicopter pilot—an Aussie with tattoos, not someone you fuck with—dropped me off in the middle of the jungle. I said, "This doesn't look right," but he left me there, alone, in the fucking rain forest. I'd heard stories about python snakes; after an hour I started going crazy. Someone at the base camp figured it out, but I was there for *two hours*! **15 Didn't you have a mishap on your current film, *Girl in the Cadillac*?** Yes, I broke my pinky when a gun jammed. It's very scary using guns.

GUESS WHO DON'T SUE

Mr. Major Movie Star is a real charmer: not only did he rent a home for his wife and kids while filming down south, but he also rented a house for his mistress!

Mr. Pop, who often writes for films these days, has a favorite name he uses to throw off the press while staying at plush hotels: "Richard Licker"—but his pals call him "Dick"!

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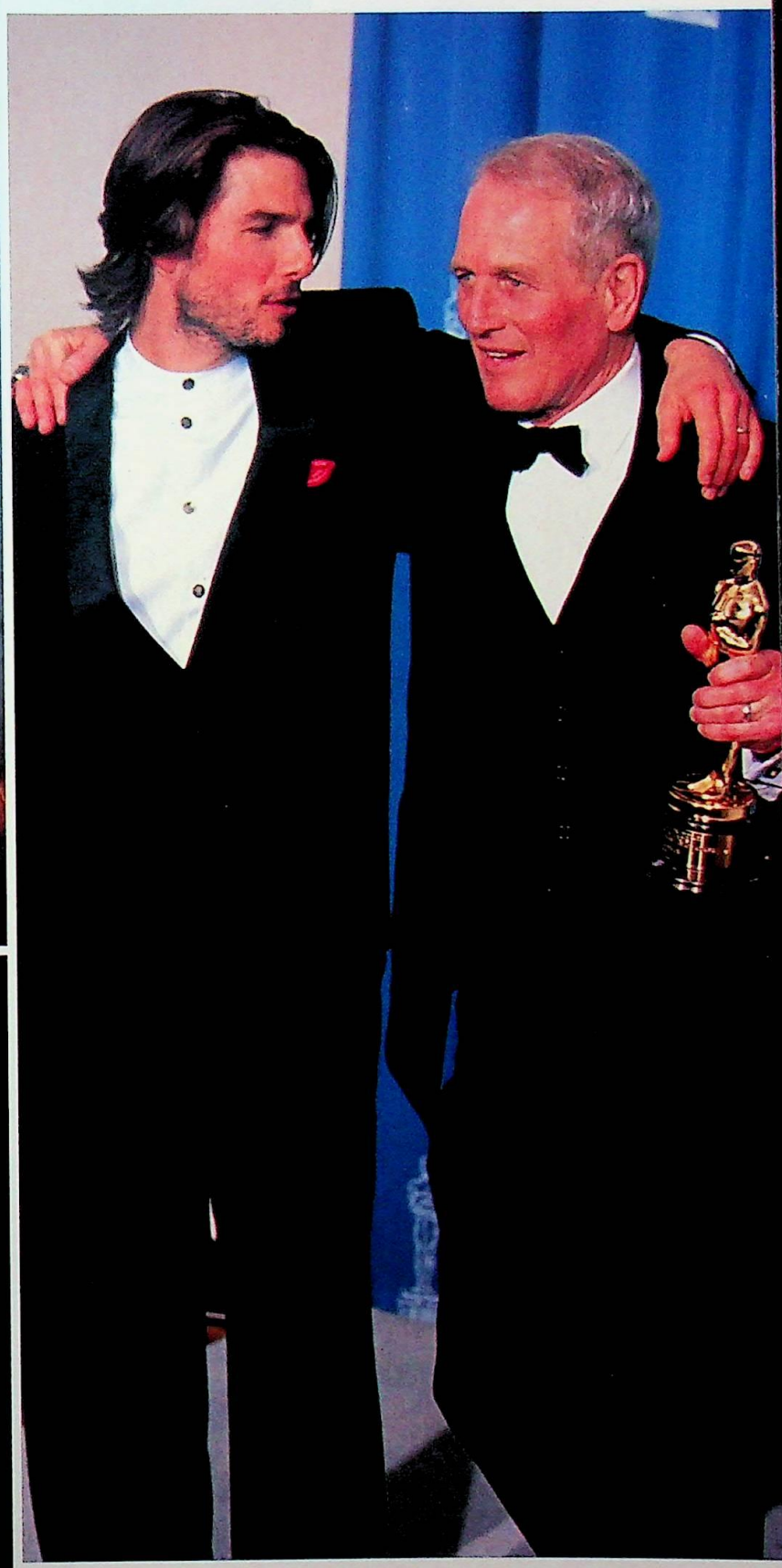
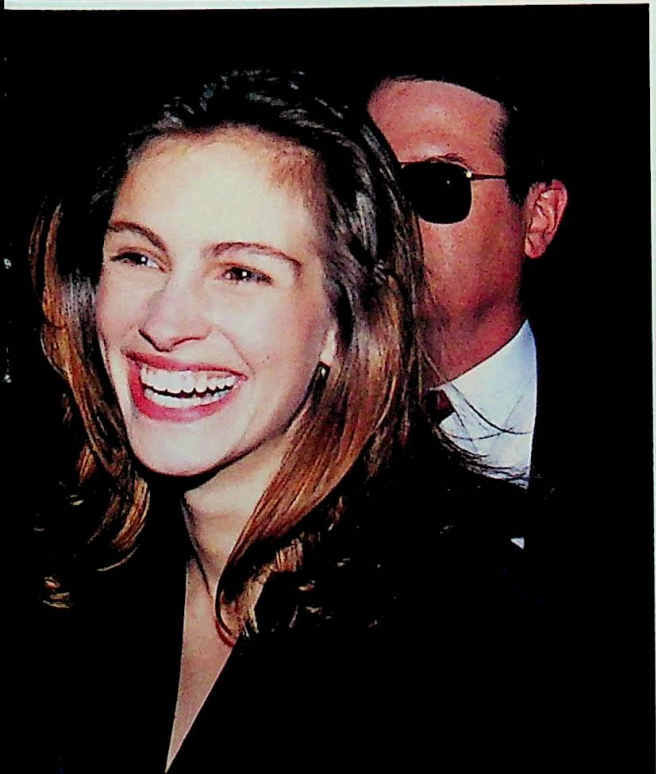
The Buddy System

It's said that politics makes strange bedfellows, but take a look at some of the unlikely friendships forged on and around sound stages.

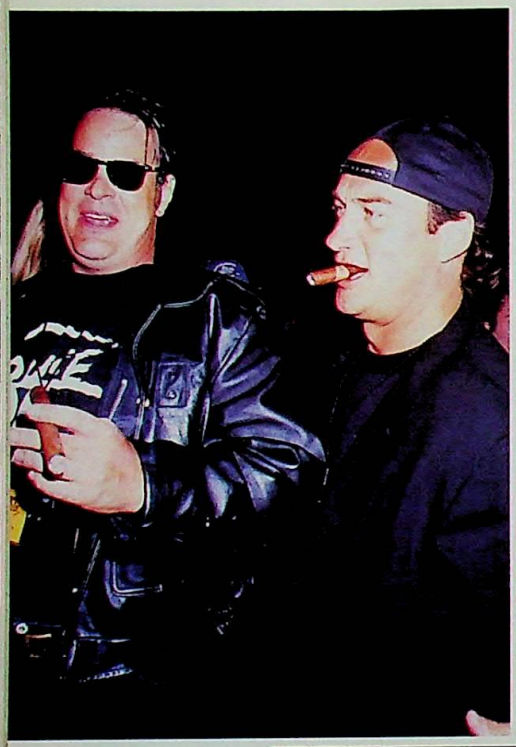
Clockwise from left: Elizabeth Taylor and Michael Jackson; Sandra Bernhard and Roseanne; Catherine Deneuve and Clint Eastwood; Tom Cruise and Paul Newman; Susan Sarandon and Julia Roberts.

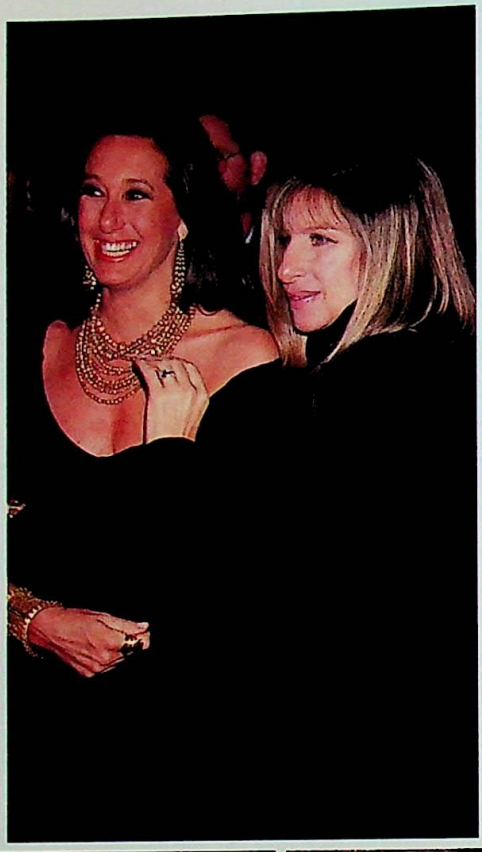


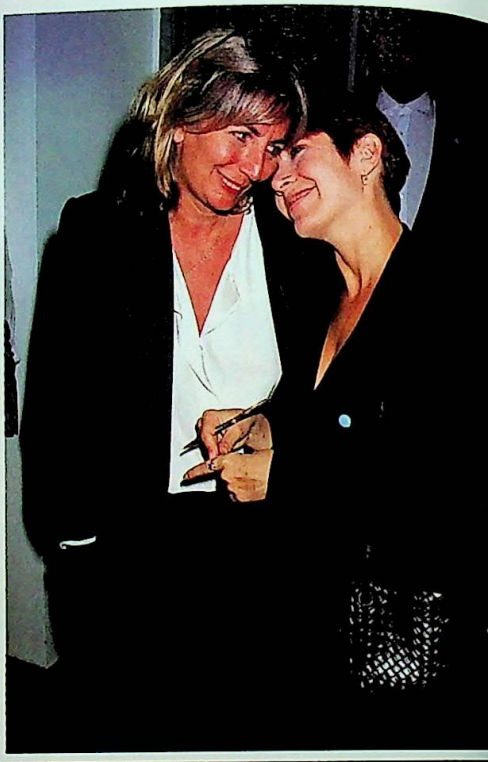


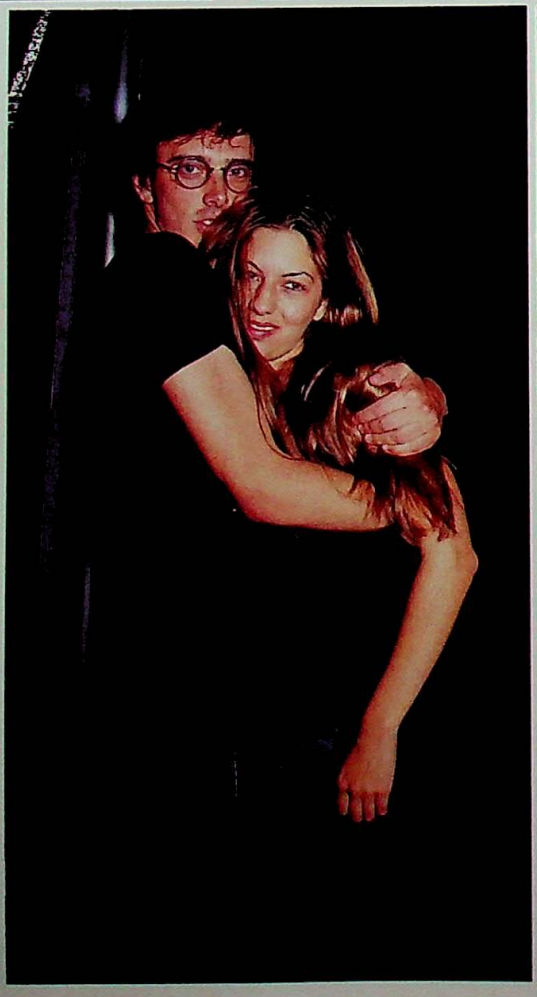
clockwise from top left: michael ferguson/globe photos; albert ortega/ron galella; steve finn/globe photos; jim

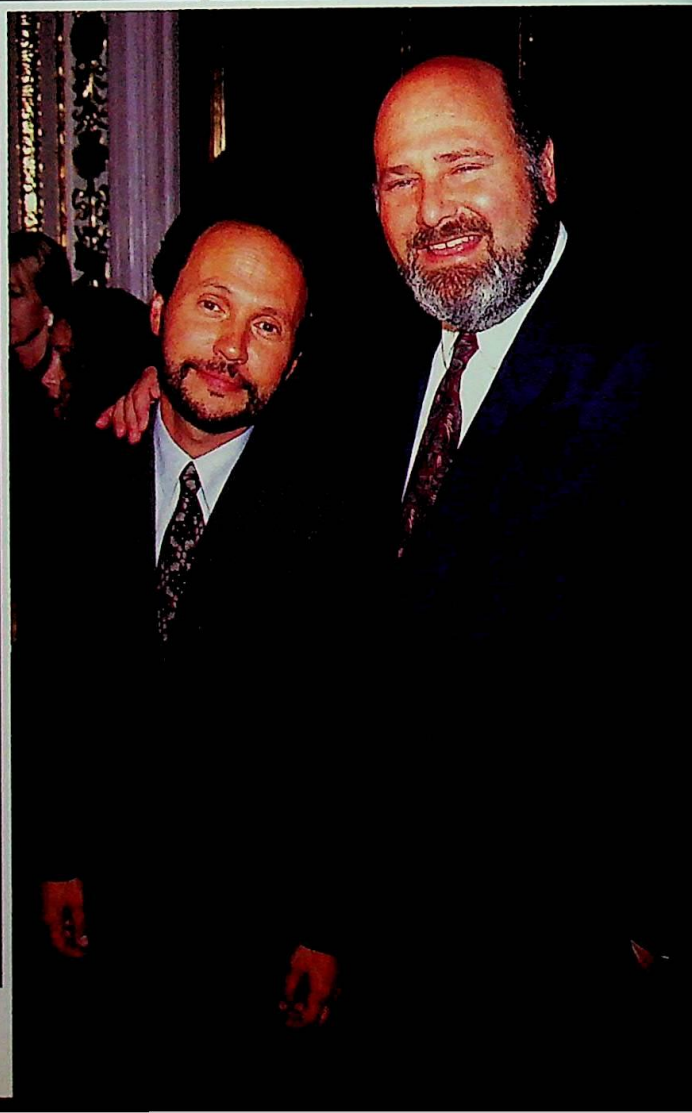
The look



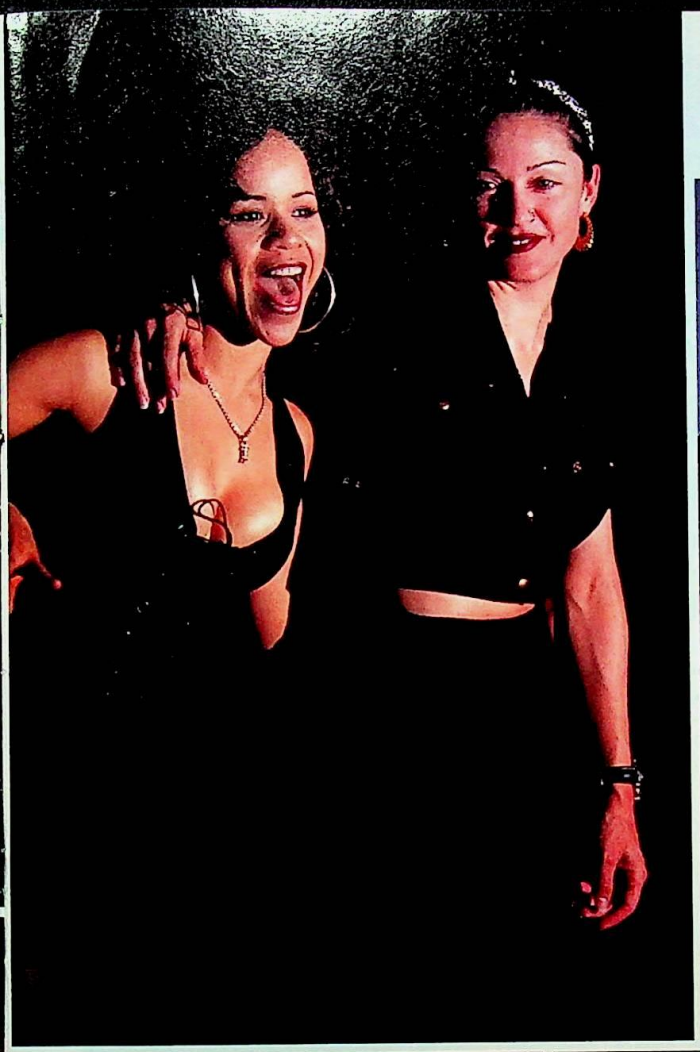


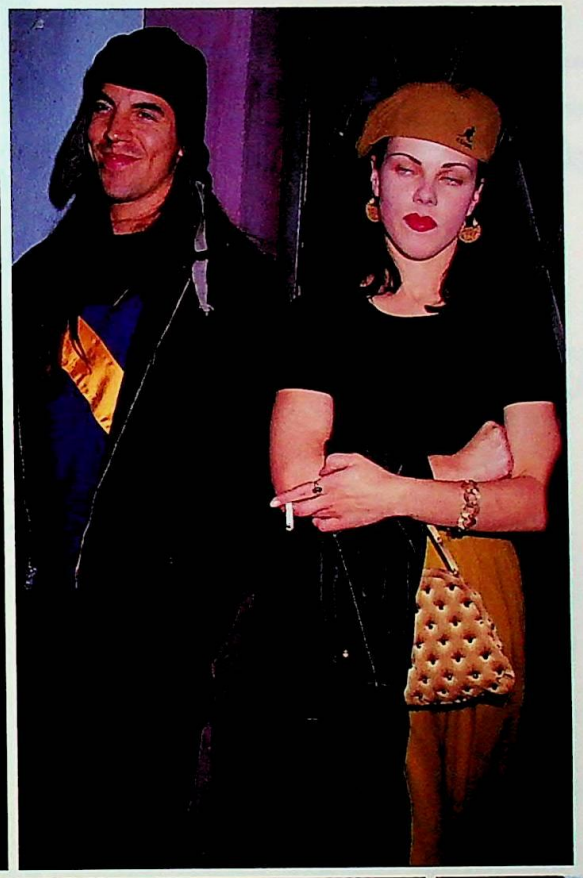




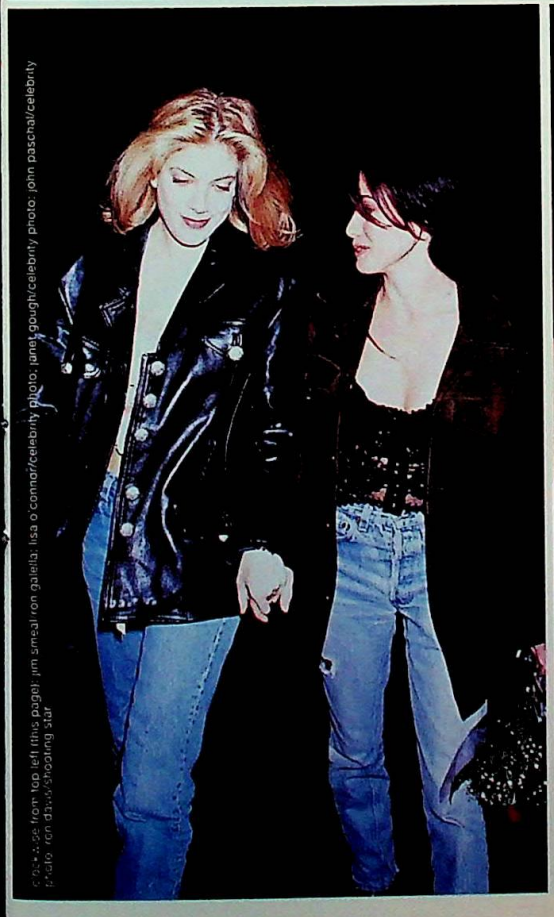


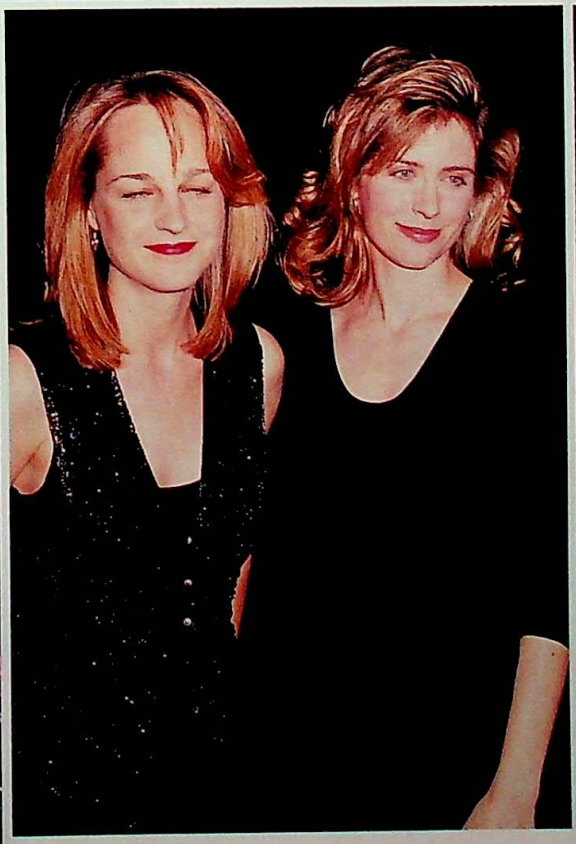
Clockwise from top left (this page): Dan Aykroyd and Jim Belushi; Donna Karan and Barbra Streisand; Penny Marshall and Carrie Fisher; Billy Crystal and Rob Reiner; Donovan Leitch and Sofia Coppola.

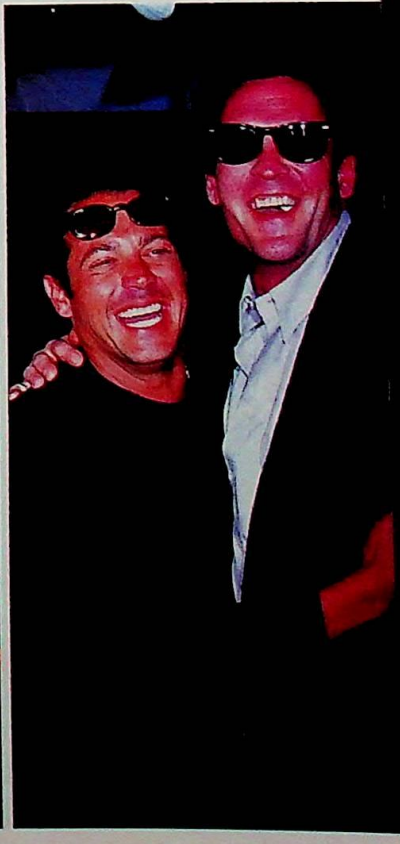




Clockwise from top left (this page): Rosie Perez and Madonna; Anthony Kiedis and Debi Mazar; Chad McQueen and Michael Madsen; Helen Hunt and Helen Slater; Tori Spelling and Shannen Doherty.

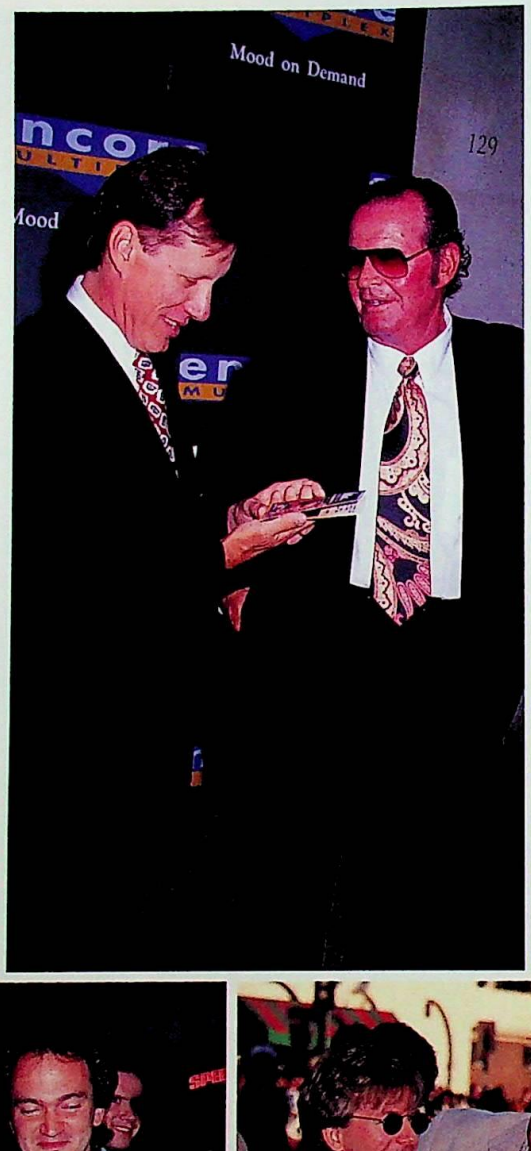




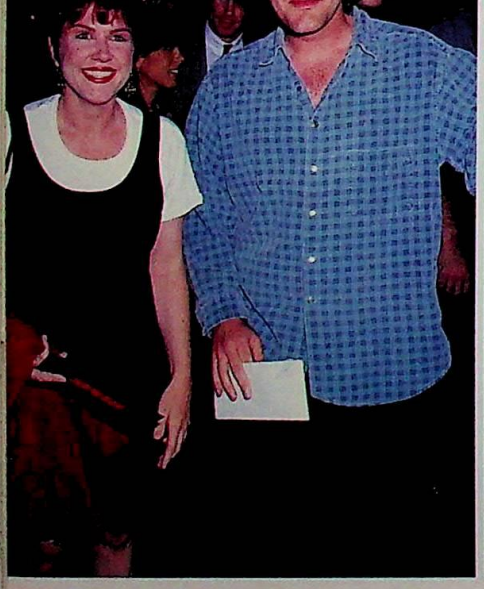


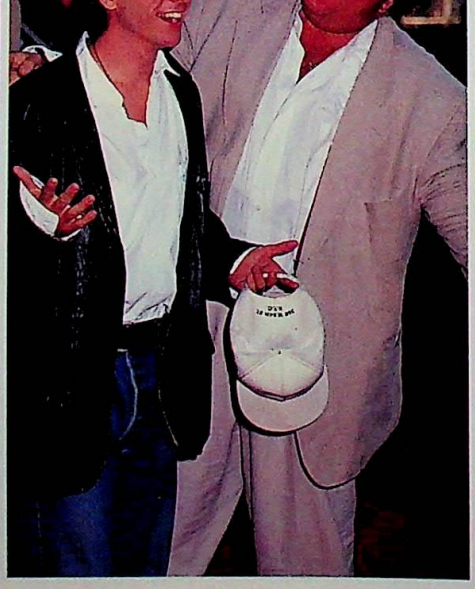
clockwise from top left this page: jim smeal/ron galella; lisa o'connor/celebrity photo; janet gough/celebrity photo; john paschal/celebrity photo; ron galella/shooting star

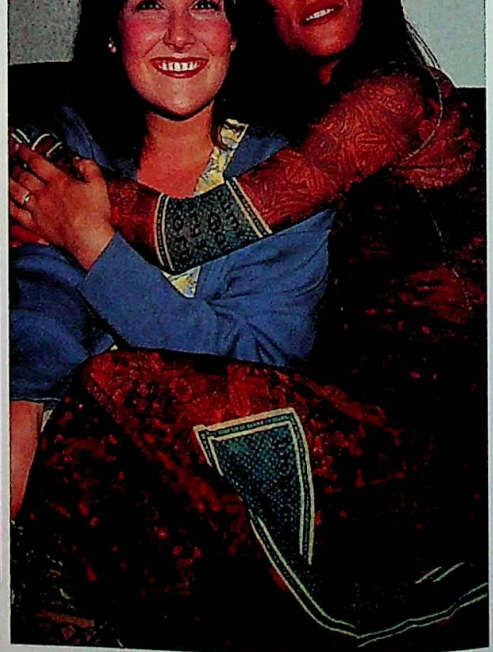
The look



Clockwise from top left: James Woods and James Garner; Jack Nicholson and Warren Beatty; Ricki Lake and Veronica Webb; David Spade and Chris Farley; Julia Sweeney and Quentin Tarantino.







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Good Un-American Movies

Polish veteran Krzysztof Kieslowski soars with classical elegance in *Red*; New Zealand newcomer Peter Jackson scores with iconoclastic vision in *Heavenly Creatures*.

A lot of money goes into Hollywood movies, and the money can buy casts of thousands, the most astounding aircraft or the most ingenious matte paintings. But it can't buy true visual style. For that you need a director with a genuine command of the medium; in other words, you need talent, and no amount of hocus pocus can substitute for the genuine article. Krzysztof Kieslowski's ***Red*** probably cost about one-fiftieth of the budget of *Wyatt Earp* or *True Lies*, and yet it's infinitely more exciting to watch.

Irene Jacob, Jean-Louis Trintignant in *Red*.

What exhilarated us once about foreign films like *Last Year at Marienbad*, *8½* and *Jules and Jim* was their dizzying infatuation with the unique language of cinema. That's the pleasure that Kieslowski revives in *Red*, the third and best film in his Three Colors trilogy. *Red* has an arresting story (written by Kieslowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz) and compelling characters, but what makes it so mesmerizing is Kieslowski's mastery of all the tools of his trade—imagery, sound, music and performance.

The film opens with a virtuoso shot tracking a telephone call along the underwater cables from London to Geneva. The telephone is absolutely central to this story about trust and betrayal, broken connections and unexpected rapprochements. So many of our interactions depend on the telephone, and in several sequences of *Red*, a missed phone call foreshadows a more profound disruption between two people. Throughout the film Kieslowski uses sound—not just the harsh jangling of an unanswered phone, but the roar of an airplane overhead, the creaking of a rusty gate, a rock smashing a window—to underscore the dislocation that the characters feel.

The central relationship is between a retired judge (Jean-Louis Trintignant), who has cut himself off from all human contact, and an ingenuous young model named Valentine (Irene Jacob), who meets him by accident and restores his belief in human possibilities. The movie's deepest theme is the way in which chance encounters can set off ripples that alter and transform a whole series of interlocked lives. The impact that Valentine has on the judge is clinched in the unexpected emotional climax of the film. Valentine invites him to a fashion show; the way the scene is shot, with flashing white lights and soaring music (by Kieslowski's regular collaborator, Zbigniew Preisner), turns it into a romantic epiphany. We feel the communion between the two characters, even though they are not on-screen together during the scene. It's a prime example of Kieslowski's ability to use nonverbal techniques to speak volumes.

Kieslowski also works triumphantly with the actors. There's something immensely satisfying about his pairing of a rising young actress and one of the screen's legendary performers. Irene Jacob has an absolutely luminous face that the camera loves, and her openness makes us believe she could awaken the world-weary judge. Trintignant uses the skills he's perfected in some 30 years of acting to express both the withering cynicism of this bitter old judge and the emotional upheaval he experiences on confronting a woman who shatters all his preconceptions.

Red is unquestionably a great piece of filmmaking, but is it a great film? I've had reservations about Kieslowski's past films—*The Double Life of Veronique* as well as *Blue* and *White*—because I felt they were at times willfully obscure. There's an off-putting touch of hubris in the pleasure Kieslowski takes in mystifying audiences. This urge to obfuscate surfaces only occasionally in *Red*, but it hurts the very end of the movie, when Kieslowski indulges in a precious in-joke that sabotages the emotional catharsis. In this case, however, the director's virtuosity is its own reward. Kieslowski has said he plans to retire from filmmaking after this movie, and although one may regret his decision, one can understand the impulse to quit while you're this far ahead of the game.

Fortunately, there are still a few up-and-coming directors who demonstrate the kind of filmmaking brio that studios do their best to scotch. The young New Zealand director, Peter Jackson, has done a few stylish horror pictures, but ***Heavenly Creatures*** marks a major leap forward for an exciting new talent. The pic-

by stephen farber

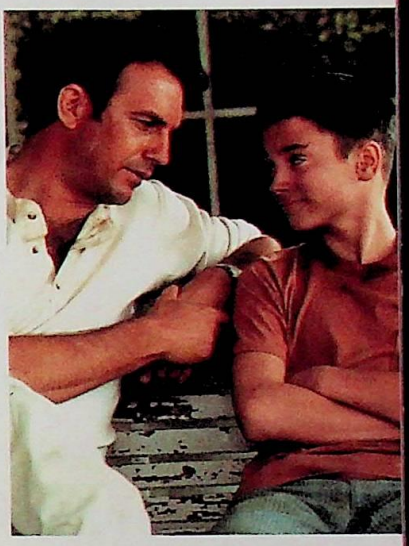
Premieres

ture doesn't have the classical, elegant perfection of *Red*. It's rough around the edges and sometimes too florid, but it's the work of a natural-born moviemaker.

This is based on one of the most famous true-crime stories in New Zealand's history, about two adolescent girls who conspired to commit a murder. Pauline is a homely wallflower from a poor family, while Juliet is beautiful and aristocratic. But both of them are outsiders; Juliet is isolated by her arrogance as Pauline is by her awkwardness. They both have turbulent imaginations, and they instantly become soul mates. Jackson and his co-writer, Frances Walsh, do an extraordinary job of drawing us inside the girls' imaginative world. The film starts out almost like *The World of Henry Orient*, with scenes of the girls running through the woods, mooning over movie stars, and concocting strange rituals as they cement their friendship. But the "lyricism" is deliberately exaggerated, even frenzied, and it makes us uncomfortable from the start. Pauline and Juliet are consumed by romantic fantasies that at first seem laughably naive and overheated, but turn increasingly bizarre and macabre.

Is *Heavenly Creatures* a film about lesbianism? Certainly there is a strong sexual attraction between the two girls that the film doesn't fudge. But in its mocking treatment of the adults who try to label their friendship as "unwholesome," the film is urging us to see beyond any tidy summary. Jackson qualifies as an artist because he respects the mystery and complexity of his characters' obsessions. He allows us to sympathize with them without denying the humanity of the woman they kill. The three central performances—by two newcomers, Melanie Lynskey and Kate Winslet, and a veteran actress, Sarah Peirse—are all stunning. This is an unsparing work, even-handed and therefore deeply disturbing. At a time when fiercely iconoclastic directorial vision is in danger of disappearing, Peter Jackson gives us reason to hope that a few stubborn maverick talents will survive the homogenization of the cinematic landscape.

The War begins in the style of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, with leisurely scenes of childhood games and quarrels. Then it adds an ambitious subplot about the Vietnam War, spectacular action sequences, and several uplifting endings. There are fine moments, especially those involving Kevin Costner (in one of his most heartfelt performances) as a Vietnam vet, but screenwriter Kathy McWorter needs a crash course in structure, and director Jon Avnet strains too hard to turn a sweet, modest memoir into a momentous epic.



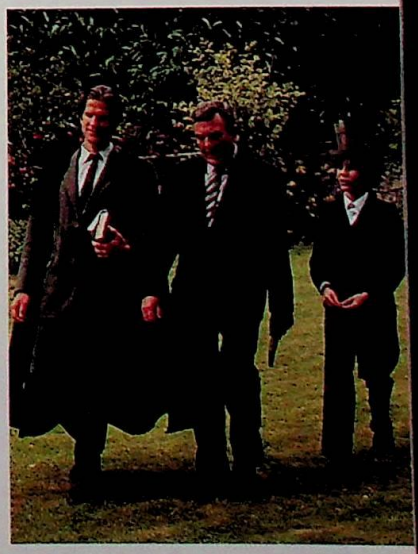
Kevin Costner, Elijah Wood in *The War*.

Ed Wood is Tim Burton's affectionate homage to the director frequently called the worst in Hollywood history. Johnny Depp gives a likable performance as an auteur who believes wholeheartedly in his talent despite a mountain of evidence to the contrary. Martin Landau is even better as a drug-ravaged Bela Lugosi, and Bill Murray camps it up lustily as a transvestite pal of Wood's. The script, however, doesn't have much psychological acuity, and it all wears thin after the first hour.

The Shawshank Redemption has been bewilderingly praised by some critics as a searing study of prison life. In truth it's the purest Hollywood hokum—a sunny, heart-tugging hymn to that old chestnut, the indomitability of the human spirit. The acting is strong, and the tears are jerked effectively by director Frank Darabont. But this film is every bit as fraudulent as the year's other feel-good crock, *Forrest Gump*.

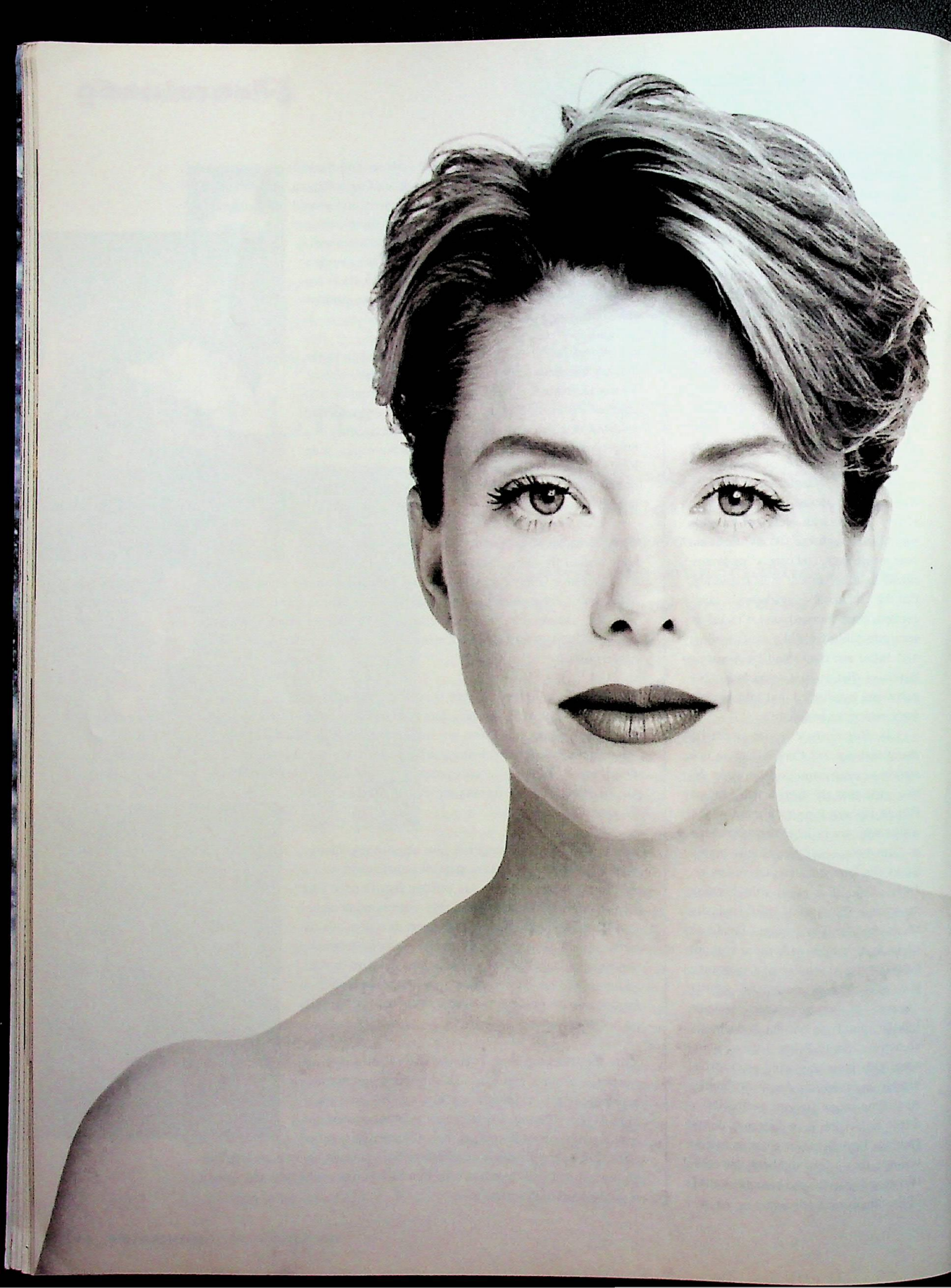
The Beans of Egypt, Maine is the latest variation on *Tobacco Road*—the saga of a lecherous, dirt-poor family of outsiders in rural New England. The script meanders, and there are some major missteps, like the casting of Rutger Hauer as the proletarian patriarch. But there are also some potent sexual scenes from a woman's point of view and good performances by Martha Plimpton as the heroine and Patrick McGaw as her no-good husband.

Matthew Modine, Albert Finney, Ben Silverstone in *The Browning Version*.



Silent Fall, an eerie suspense film about a psychiatrist (Richard Dreyfuss) enlisted to treat an autistic child who is the primary witness to a double murder, doesn't have a lot of plot surprises. But it's thoroughly engrossing nonetheless, thanks to Bruce Beresford's expert direction. All the technical credits—especially Peter James's cinematography and Stewart Copeland's musical score—are top-drawer, and Beresford has drawn amazing performances from Ben Faulkner as the boy and ravishing ex-model Liv Tyler as his distraught sister.

The Browning Version. Terence Rattigan's old warhorse about a rigid British schoolmaster remains absorbing in this handsome, updated version directed by Mike Figgis. The few contemporary references seem jarring; the film would have been more effective as a period piece. But Albert Finney's multifaceted performance holds it all together. Finney is beautifully matched with Ben Silverstone as the boy who finally melts the heart of the martinet.



A Private Star

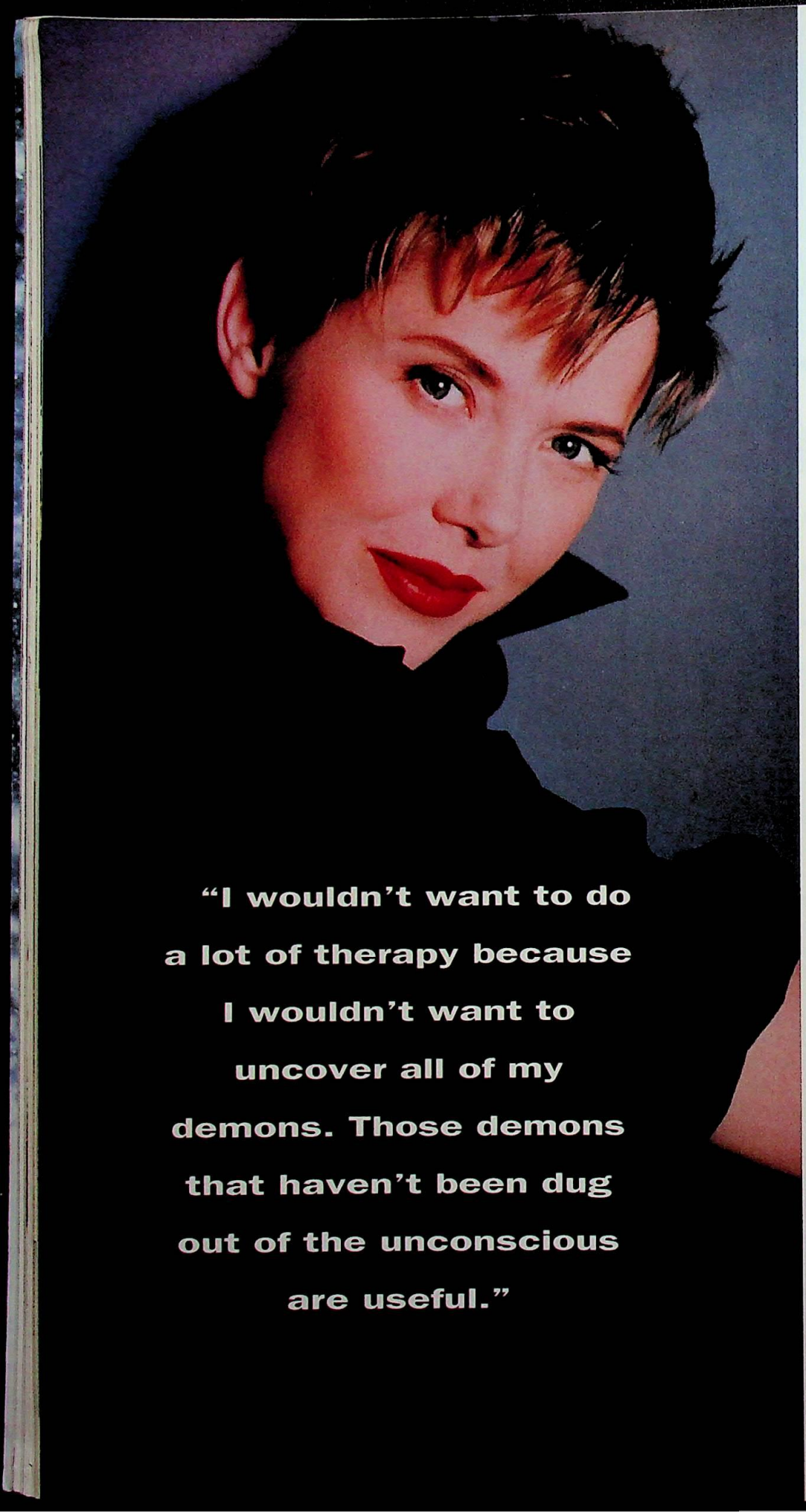
by lawrence grobel

In retrospect, it's all sort of hilarious," says Annette Bening of the media circus in which her current life as star, mother, and wife of Warren Beatty began. Here she opens up about why she dislikes feminist complaints about Hollywood, what actors intimidate her, and just how unlikely it is her husband would approve of her doing a nude scene like the one she did in *The Grifters*.

She wanted to meet at a restaurant, but with all that I had been reading about Annette Bening and how she drove frustrated reporters to write about *their* experiences rather than what she *didn't* have to say, I certainly didn't want to try my luck in a public place. She's married to Warren Beatty, so she obviously has been learning from the master of interview avoidance and nonrevelation. She agreed to come to my house and drove up in her white BMW dressed in white stretch pants and a loose-fitting white shirt. She looked good and seemed friendly. I told her I had once interviewed Warren many years ago—I didn't tell her 20 years ago, because that would make her 16 and I didn't want to seem that old. She was still in high school in San Diego then.

The Bening family was originally from Wichita, Kansas, but Annette was seven when they moved to California. She grew up in San Diego, where her father was in the insurance business. She had a normal, unremarkable childhood, went to the local junior college where she began to act, and ended up at the American Conservatory Theater (ACT). She got married and she and her husband moved to Denver to do theater. Later, in New York, she landed a play called *Coastal Disturbances* and was nominated for a Tony. She made a TV pilot but she was dropped when the show got picked up. Then she auditioned for a John Hughes movie, *The Great Outdoors*, and won a part opposite Dan Aykroyd. Mike Nichols cast her in a cameo in *Postcards From the Edge*. Milos Forman cast her in *Valmont*. Then Stephen Frears put her in *The Grifters* and Annette Bening was noticed. Big time. Her cunning role earned her an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress. Other parts came readily: she played De Niro's wife in *Guilty by Suspicion*, Harrison Ford's wife in *Regarding Henry* and Bugsy Siegel's girlfriend Virginia Hill in Warren Beatty's *Bugsy*. She and Beatty fell in love, and the Playboy of the Hollywood World became Mr. Annette Bening.

Bening won the plum role in *Batman*



"I wouldn't want to do a lot of therapy because I wouldn't want to uncover all of my demons. Those demons that haven't been dug out of the unconscious are useful."

Returns as Catwoman, only to give it up when she became pregnant. Other films were offered to her, but the one she waited to do was a remake of *Love Affair* (which was already remade once as 1957's *An Affair to Remember*), in which she starred with her husband.

LAWRENCE GROBEL: Reading about some of your past interviews made me a bit wary. Are you amused or annoyed when you read how you stymie journalists?

ANNETTE BENING: Oh, neither. I feel bad, because I don't want to annoy people, or make it frustrating for them. If anything, I want to please people too much. But the fact is, there are some things I just can't talk about, because then they somehow become less valuable to me.

Q: What reporters have said about you has also been said about your husband over the years. Has Warren ever talked to you about dealing with celebrity?

A: Sure, yes, he's very helpful about that, because he's real smart about it. It happened to him so young.

Q: What did he talk to you about?

A: How it affects your life and your friends, your family, which I was very naive about. I didn't understand the ripple effect and what it does to your siblings.

Q: Did Warren talk to you about how to handle the press?

A: Yeah, we're kind of similar in that way. I have mixed feelings about it, as does he.

Q: Your feelings about *Love Affair*, I assume, are also similar. As the producer, did Warren have to talk you into doing it the way he did Katharine Hepburn?

A: No, he didn't have to talk me into it. I remember him being away, in New York, I think, when I was watching the original 1939 version, which is the one I really love and was inspired by. I got to the big moment, before they come together, and I was totally engrossed in the movie, sitting in our kitchen crying, when he called. Which I thought was a nice synchronistic kind of thing.

Q: How did you feel about updating

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Irene Dunne's performance?

A: Somewhat in awe. Her performance was so luminescent. I felt a bit intimidated by that.

Q: And your feelings after you saw what you and Warren did?

A: Proud. It's entertaining, it's the kind of movie people have a good time going to see.

Q: Warren's courtship of Hepburn caught the attention of the press. Did you think he would get her?

A: No. It's a great, great movie itself: his determination, and her reluctance, and yet her delight in being courted. I was as into it as he was, because the scene between these two women is the center of the picture. It has to do with passing on wisdom. I felt we really needed someone people would sit up and listen to when that moment came. If there's anybody people are going to sit up and listen to, it's her! Talk about movie star quality. I've never seen anything like it. All of the talent is still there.

Q: Did you get to know her at all?

A: No, I was intimidated by her. She's tough. Tough. Everybody told me how much she liked me, but I was very reluctant to make any demands on her, like ask her, "What was *The Philadelphia Story* like?" I just stood back, waiting for anything she needed.

Q: Did you say anything at all to her?

A: I offered an answer to a question once, and she said something to me like, "Why would you know all the answers?"

Q: I can see why you stood back. How about Warren, how was he with her?

A: In heaven. He completely doted on her. They were adorable together. He's nuts about her and she really likes him. She would make jokes that cut him down to size, right? And he would always be very good-natured about it. It was a whole other drama in itself.

Q: What about acting with Warren—did he ever surprise you?

A: All the time. Warren never talks about his acting. He's not self-conscious about it in the way that some actors are. He's one of those people who's very subtle and doesn't seem to be acting.

Q: With Warren as producer and your co-star, how were you able to separate your professional and your personal lives?

A: It's all the same . . . it's all life.

Q: Did you talk about it at home?

A: All the time. We even rehearsed a bit at home.

Q: How about in the editing room? Were you welcome there?

A: Oh yeah, sure. I might say, "I would prefer the other take." Didn't mean it got used, just meant I had a chance to make my case. It was very humbling.

Q: Did you work your schedule around your second pregnancy?

A: No, I got pregnant at the very end. What happened was, we had our first baby and then it was a year-and-a-half later when we started the movie.

Q: So you were basically on hold for those 18 months?

A: Yes. There was one film, and possibly two, that I would have done had I known.

Q: Which films were they?

A: I don't really like to say because it's kind of bad form, but there were a couple of pictures I was offered and because of *Love Affair* I didn't do them. And then it turned out I probably could have. Then by the end of the movie I got pregnant, so it all worked out fine.

Q: Didn't the big earthquake happen while you were making *Love Affair*?

A: Yeah. It was supposed to be the last day of shooting and we were just finishing up the last scene, so it was dramatic. Warren had gone to bed very early and wanted to get away so he could have quiet, so he was in another part of the house. When it hit we were both coming for the kid from opposite directions.

Q: Was he coming for the kid or for you?

A: No, you go for the kid.

Q: How badly was your house damaged?

A: We have to start over. It's devastating. It's harder for Warren because he built it. It was incredible that nobody was hurt. All the windows in the living room, in the whole house actually, broke.

Q: Wasn't it close to where Brando and Nicholson have their homes?

A: About a mile away. Warren's been great about it. He always says, "It's fine, it's just a house." I was newly pregnant and you honestly do feel like that, like, the house, who cares? It's just a house. But as time went on I saw the kind of deeper trauma of it. It's that whole readjustment. There's lots of nuts and bolts issues and people you have to deal with, which is the hardest part of it. Although I hate to complain because we are so lucky, we don't have to worry about finding disposable diapers like women I read about in the Valley.

Q: What did the earthquake teach you about your fear?

A: That if you're a parent, all you think about is your child. In the moment you don't register the fear. In retrospect, when I think about it, it can really scare me. I've lived in California most of my life, San Francisco for seven years, so I've been in a lot of little earthquakes. I wasn't a worrisome person—it was always, "Nothing will happen." Now that's changed. It *can* happen, and it can wipe you out. And if you have children—what if they're somewhere else? That's the stuff that's out of your hands. That's the scariest.

Q: Mike Nichols, who directed you in *Postcards From the Edge*, said he was impressed with your sexiness and intelligence.

A: Really?

Q: What impressed you about him?

A: His sexiness and intelligence. [*Laughs*] He's a friend, he's just smart and funny. He has this way of making you feel totally competent, and he has great taste.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: Happy.

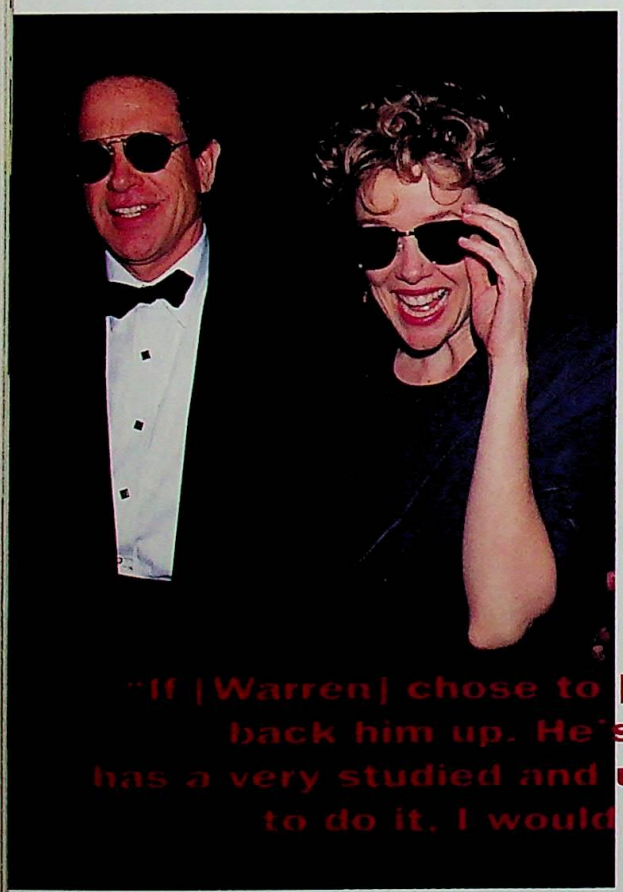
Q: Any memories of leaving Wichita at seven to move to San Diego?

A: One vivid memory I have is pulling away from a curb when we were leaving. I was sitting in the front seat in the middle because I was the youngest and the smallest of four kids and I remember crying—as a kid you feel the enormity of the moment, but you really don't know what it is. You just feel

emotion. It still happens to me.

Q: Were you treated differently because you were the baby in your family?

A: If you'd asked me that a few years ago I would have said no, because we were all so close in age, we were four in five years. But maybe I was because I was always kind of a ham. And a mimic. It's so bad to hear that from an actor, but it's true. I was a mimic and was doing the little plays in the backyard. It was a very loud, boisterous, raucous, kind of messy childhood. We had our dysfunctions, but it was generally loving.



"If [Warren] chose to [run for office], I would completely back him up. He's got great political sense. He has a very studied and unique perspective. If he ever chose to do it, I would be good at being with him."

Q: Did you and your brothers and sister fight much?

A: Yeah, we all fought like crazy. All the time.

Q: Were you always coming out the loser?

A: No, I don't remember losing all the time. My sister and I fought a lot when we were kids. I was the little bratty sister and she would kind of walk away, not wanting to be associated with me.

Q: When did it become hard for your parents?

A: When we were teenagers we were extremely difficult.

Q: Were those the years you worked for your dad as his secretary?

A: My dad was in the life insurance business, so I learned about selling when I was about 14, because I started working as a secretary.

Q: What did the experience teach you?

A: What it taught me was a lot about my father. I saw him in this whole other way. He was very extroverted and animated as a teacher.

Q: Were you ever cynical about his profession, put it down the way Willy Loman's kids did in *Death of a Salesman*?

A: No, I didn't put it down. What I remember is how rude some of the men were to me. I was pretty cute and I didn't understand or feel able to handle the way some of the men treated me. Which was rude. Making sexist remarks. I remember being unable to deal with it. So at the time my experience was confusion. Later, when I took my first women's study class when I was in college I began to understand what I was feeling at the time, the anger that I felt.

Q: Did your parents ever warn you about men?

A: No. I wish my parents had talked to me about it.

Q: I have a 14-year-old daughter and I've already warned her that all boys her age and older are interested in one thing, and she should be prepared for that.

A: What's missing from that is her feelings. What about her sexual feelings?

Q: I don't want to know! Could you have talked to your parents about your sexual feelings at 14?

A: I would have liked it if they would have brought it up, yeah.

Q: Like what?

A: Just: "You'll have sexual feelings, you might have some, there may be people around you having sex, it's a personal decision that you make, it's something that everybody goes through. Sometimes sexual feelings are confusing. Sometimes you might feel attracted to somebody... you're able to have a child... you should be aware." There's a zillion things you can say that don't demand responses.

Q: You seem to be including some sort of approval among your things to say. Must you tell a 14 year old that it's her personal decision to make?

A: Well, my parents were very strict sexually. It just was not discussed. Also, they were not aware of how sexually active everybody was in the culture. There were a lot of girls that were on the pill when I was in the ninth grade.

Q: What about drugs?

A: They weren't aware of what was going on. I did my share of drugs. I don't anymore. I was able to experiment and do a lot of drugs, then I stopped because I didn't care anymore, I wanted to pursue acting, I had this thing I had to do. But there are a lot of people that didn't happen to, who have never gotten out of it. I'm close to a lot of those kinds of people. Most of the people here are recovered and they are, like, all of our best friends, because they're the most interesting people.

Q: What will you tell your children about experimenting with drugs?

A: You can't keep your kids from doing it—if you think you can, you're very naive. With my kids I hope I could be honest and tell them what it's like and say, "I understand, I can't control what you're going to do. If you choose to do them you're going to choose to do them." It's the same with sex. Why fool

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albert ortega/ron galella

EXCLUSIVE PREMIERE
Two of today's most exciting stars...in the love story that haunts the ages.
RALPH FIENNES JULIETTE BINOCHE
Emily Bronte's
Wuthering Heights
A TURNER NETWORK TELEVISION PRESENTATION
TNT
MONDAY, DECEMBER 5
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When he's not avoiding questions with a cagey "no comment," Eric Stoltz has a lot to say about fantasizing over his *Little Women* co-stars, what he and girlfriend Bridget Fonda thought of a recent *Movieline* profile of Charlie Sheen, and why he doesn't mind getting naked on the big screen.

SHH... Don't Say

by stephen saban

In 1988, as we strolled alongside New York's festering East River, I dogged Eric Stoltz, then 27, about his relationship with Jennifer Jason Leigh. In vain. For hours, all I could get out of him was "Jennifer who?" and "No comment." Until finally, he tossed me this morsel: "I lost my virginity when I was 19," he said. "To Ally Sheedy." Tenacity—and temerity—paid off.

Six years later, I meet up with him again, this time perched on a wall in New York's festive Washington Square Park. The 33-year-old actor is on a publicity break midway through filming *Rob Roy* in Scotland. His bright orange hair is long, augmented by four layers of ingenious extensions applied for his role in the Highland adventure. "They did a good job, huh?" he says. "Is *your* hair real?" Eric Stoltz is uncomfortable with the interview format—unless he's asking the questions.

"I'd prefer a *really short* article about me," he says. "Like maybe two paragraphs, with no quotes. In my mind, I've already said too much."

No journalist worth his Macintosh can accuse Stoltz of saying too much. Sure, he told a *New York Post* "Page Six" reporter, covering a *Killing Zoe* party at the Tunnel nightclub, that he

Anything

has two small children and a wife named Jennifer whom he'd met five years earlier when she was bartending at the club. But that was "too much" only in the sense that it was the absurd fabrication of an artful dodger. A retraction appeared the next day, not apologizing for shoddy fact-checking, but reproaching the childless bachelor for having "such a strange sense of humor that nobody gets his jokes" and for making up tall tales for the local press.

I say God bless him. I get his jokes. I enjoy his tall tales. In fact, I wouldn't have it any other way. "It makes it more fun than the usual go-see-my-movie bullshit," he says. "Facts are always the least interesting parts of stories on actors. Usually, the punctuation is the most interesting thing. Although I hate the parenthetical. The ellipsis is my personal favorite..." (Which is not surprising, given the elliptical nature of the guy.)

We meet at high noon, apt timing for a confrontation. We meet at the arch, apt setting for one so inclined. Indeed, Stoltz had alarmed his publicist earlier by telling her that we were going to spend the day copping heroin, as a colorful raison d'être for the location. But Washington Square Park was virtually dealer-free, thanks to the intermittent rain—dope traffic, like highway traffic, is slippery when wet. Stoltz seems in a good mood. He's an engaging conversationalist—witty, well-spoken and a well-spring of Weltanschauung—but he's also a cagey bastard. Badgered on one subject, he'll shift to another.

"You'll create something out of nothing," he says to me.

"One has to with you," I say.

"Exactly. But it works well."

"Actually," I say, "I like nothing."

"I like nothing too," he says. "I think nothing is underrated."

"Which, of course, is the nature of nothing," I say. Then, out of the blue—or gray, in this case—I ask, "How long have you been with Bridget Fonda?" They have been a hot item for a while now. "I think she's very cool."

"Do you?"

"Well, I don't know her, but I like her work. Um..." I clear my throat and hesitate. "Um. In a relationship with someone do you have to respect her professionally?"

He looks pained. It was probably too personal too soon. "It seems I have a hard time being attracted to someone unless I respect what they do on some level. Otherwise, I would feel disdain for them. Which is not always pleasant in a relationship." He pauses, then adds, "Sometimes it's fun though."

"So how long have you been with Bridget?"

"I'm not gonna talk about Bridget."

"You can say 'No comment.'"

"No comment," he says.

"What do you think of Jim Carrey's remake of that movie you made with Cher, *Mask*?" I ask, lightening up.

"I haven't seen it," he says, laughing, "but I'd be interested to see his take on my character."

"His interpretation, I believe, is green."

"I'm amused thinking about a few years down the line when the two movies get mixed up at the video store," Stoltz says. "People go in to rent this Jim Carrey wacky comedy and end up with a drama about a kid with a big head!"

I told him I'd just seen a screening of *Pulp Fiction*. "It's one of the best movies I've seen in a long time," I say. "Of course, I haven't seen any movies in a long time. I know we're here to talk about you, but can we talk about John Travolta for a minute?"

"I'd *rather* talk about him," Stoltz says eagerly. "You know, you grow up with the image of John Travolta being super cool—*Saturday Night Fever*, Brian De Palma, handsome young god... he, in reality, is a very silly man. And I mean that in a good way. He'll walk around the set talking in little weird voices, making people laugh. He's just..." Stoltz searches for the right word, "... strange. And kind as hell; he's the nicest guy on the set. I never expected him to have a whacked-out sense of humor."

"It doesn't surprise me," I say. "But what does amaze me is what a good actor he is, especially in *Pulp*. That whole date scene with Uma Thurman..."

"Uma! Oh my God!" Stoltz interrupts. "Can we talk about Uma Thurman? On smack, in a black wig, knocked out on the floor, oozing blood, foaming at the mouth—and she's still a goddess. And what makes her a goddess is that she's probably smarter than... well, certainly than anyone in this park."

"Present company included?"

"Yes. She's an *incredibly* bright woman. And I find that enormously appealing."

Just then, as I'm about to ask why he's so often cast in drug-related roles—as he was in both *Pulp Fiction* and *Killing Zoe*—we're approached by two confident black youths wearing identical T-shirts and carrying clipboards. "Excuse me," the male says, grinning, "would you like to buy a raffle ticket to fight the antidrug war in New York? Dollar donation, $500 first prize."

His question, as presented, was masterful in its power to pose further questions. Whose side had he actually invited us to join? Were we being asked to battle the troops opposed to drugs, or align with those fighting the problem? Was he simply offering us chances in a raffle or unloading the entire lottery? Or, was the whole thing just a ruse to peddle dope? But since Stoltz, of course, prefers asking to answering, I sit back and wait.

"An antidrug war?" Stoltz asks. "You're *fighting* drugs? You're not *selling* them?"

"Nah, I'm done with that," the youth says. "I'm three years clean already."

"That's amazing. Did you deal at all?"

The proud kid nods. "I dealt for about a year."

"When you were a dealer," Stoltz asks brightly, "were you a *friendly* dealer?"

The guy laughs at the odd question, but gives it some thought. "Ehh, depends who I dealt with, you know? Lotta times you get a wise one, know what I'm sayin'?"

"Yeah. So did you carry a piece?"

His friend had been put in jail for carryin' a piece, he says.

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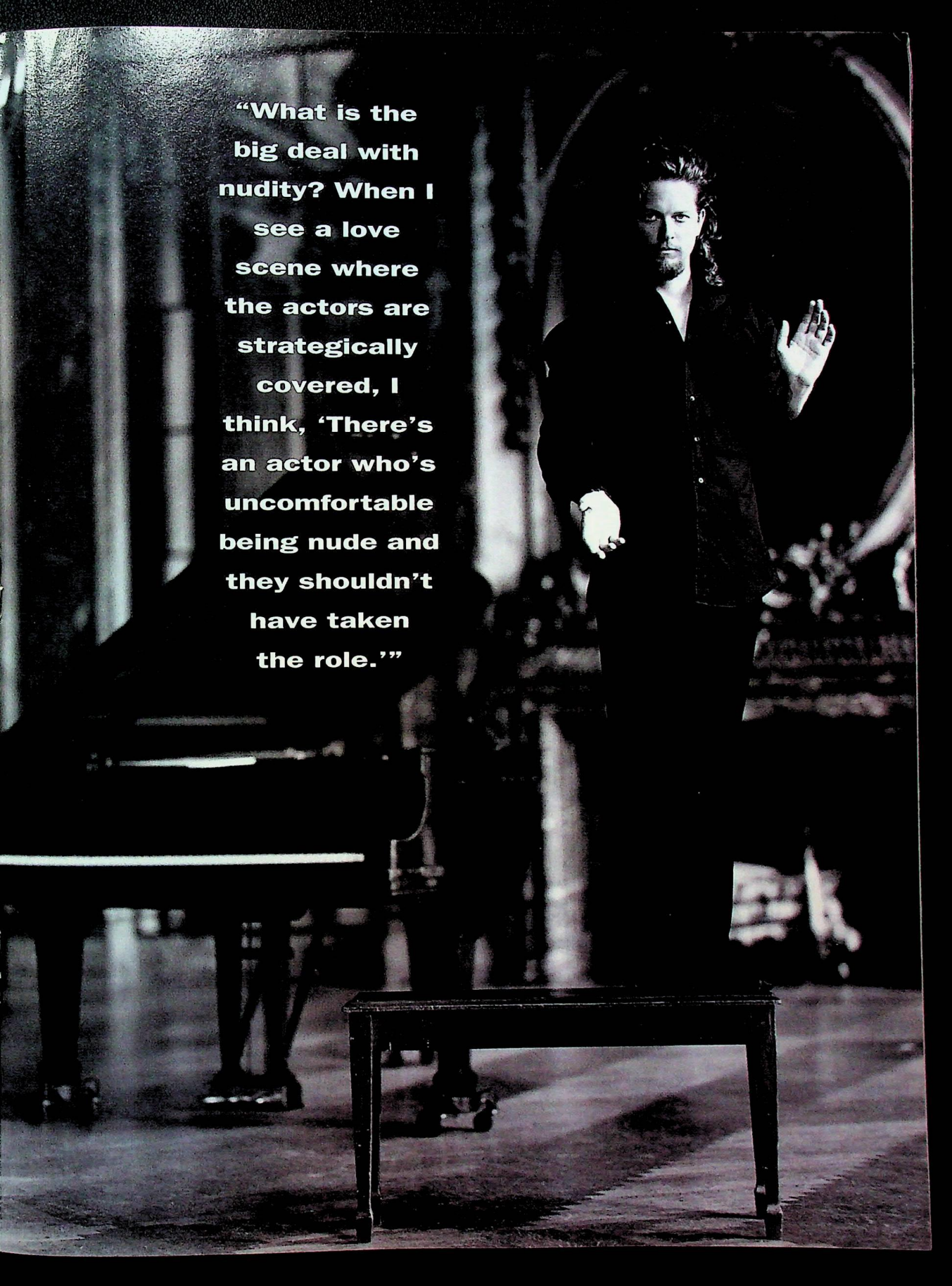
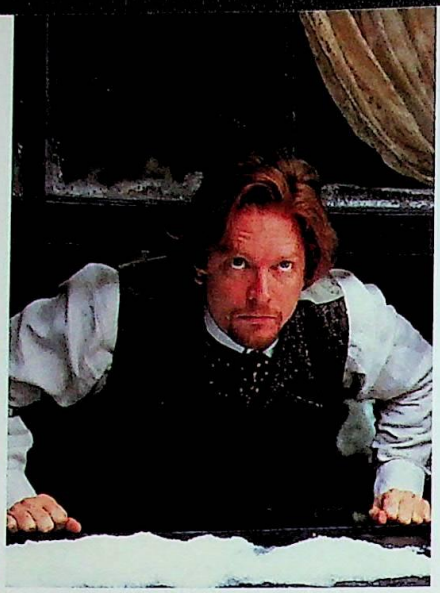

"What is the big deal with nudity? When I see a love scene where the actors are strategically covered, I think, 'There's an actor who's uncomfortable being nude and they shouldn't have taken the role.'"



E-Male: Eric Stoltz, with Nancy Travis in *Fluke* (left); as a "token male" in the latest remake of *Little Women* (right).

was with Ed Harris, Max von Sydow and Helmut Berger. A World War II espionage thing we shot in Paris. I had a supporting role."

"*Foreign Affairs*."

"A TV movie with Joanne Woodward and Brian Dennehy."

"Then that's one you definitely haven't seen," I say. "Not having a TV. A fact people seem obsessed with."

"Yeah. People seem shocked and occasionally offended that I choose not to have one."

"Maybe I'm offended, too."

"But I'm a vegetarian," Stoltz

In *Little Women*, I'm really just a token male. I sorta stand around with facial hair to prove that the little women are, in fact, heterosexual."

"Oddly enough," Stoltz says finally, after we paid our dollars and took our chances, "I play a heroin dealer in a movie."

"Oh yeah?" the guy says, with only polite interest—he'd actually *been* a dealer.

After they move on, I ask Stoltz what he'd written on his raffle stub so that the antidrug foundation could contact him if he won. "I wrote my number," he says. "I really think I've got a shot at the $500."

"You were so interested in those two," I say. "Have you ever done heroin?"

"No, I haven't. But I've filmed a person doing it so I could see how it affected him physically and imitate it, for *Killing Zoe*. It was completely voyeuristic and educational and it didn't endanger my own health."

"What do actors snort as cocaine in movies?"

"It's like a crushed up B vitamin," he says. "It's awful."

"Wasn't there a lot of real cocaine use in the industry when you started?"

"Oh yeah, in the '80s. *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* was one giant party movie. I remember people going to certain crew trucks to indulge. That doesn't happen anymore. On movie sets."

"Because of the times? Or the budgets?"

"I think it's the times," he says. "You know, in the early '80s everyone was indulging in everything."

"So who was indulging in *Fast Times*? Cast or crew?"

"No comment," Stoltz says.

Although it's virtually a waste of time to even dabble in research prior to going up against Stoltz, I did arrive with a few movie titles from the actor's early career. "I'd never even heard of these," I explain to him, "let alone seen them."

"I might not have seen them either," he says, laughing. "What are they?"

"*Running Hot*."

"I think that was my second or third film, and we literally made it for about 70 grand and shot it in 12 days. A lurid little couple-on-the-lam kind of picture. It was fun."

"*Surf II*. Which seems interesting not only because there was no *Surf I*, but the cast included Ruth Buzzi, Terry Kiser, Eddie Deezen, Carol Wayne, Lyle Waggoner. . . I looked it up; don't hate me because I'm dutiful."

"Yeah," he says, "it was one of those chock-full-o'-comedians beach-schlock films. I had a small role. I don't remember much about it. Keep 'em coming, Stephen."

"*Code Name: Emerald*."

"That was not bad, actually. It says, "and I'm not offended when you eat *meat*. I don't force my way of living on anyone. Yet."

How did he know I was carnivorous? "What else don't you have?"

"A life."

Maybe he can't *afford* a TV? "Are you wealthy at least?"

"I think I'm wealthy," he says, though even less private actors would be reluctant to talk about money. "I make a good living for what I do. Well, it depends. If I'm doing an independent film I'm making no money—probably losing money. But if I'm doing a studio film, I'll make a decent wage. I can live for a year without working."

"How much cash do you have on you right now?"

He stands up, pulls some bills from his jeans pocket and counts them in front of God-knows-who in the park. "Seventy-three dollars," he announces. "I have a friend who likes to carry around a wad of a thousand dollars, because it makes him feel powerful."

"Who?"

"No comment."

"So are you as nice a guy as you seem?" I ask.

"I can be," he says. "I'm certainly trying to be a nice guy for an interview."

I laugh. "That's right," I say, shaking my head. "You're an *actor*! How stupid of me."

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No on-screen appendage is truly safe in this age of violent cinema. If you think ears are, just listen up!

Lend Me Your Ears

by joe queenan

In the opening sequence of last summer's thriller *Speed*, mad bomber Dennis Hopper forcefully inserts a small knife in the eardrum of a security guard who has confronted him in the basement of a skyscraper in downtown Los Angeles. In doing so, Hopper became, as far as I can determine, the first major star in the history of motion pictures to appear in two movies in which he severs, mutilates, pierces or otherwise inflicts irreparable damage on another human being's acoustic apparatus, having already chopped off a man's ear in *Blue Velvet*. Although it is in some ways disheartening that the man who once embodied the countercultural ethos in renegade films such as *Easy Rider* and *The Last Movie* now plies his trade by mutilating other actors' auditory equipment in mainstream summer films such as *Speed*, it should not come as a huge surprise to the viewing public that Hopper should be the man singled out by the industry as the first recidivist ear mutilator in the rich history of the art form. If somebody has to be a serial ear brutilizer, Dennis Hopper seems like the right man for the job.

The ear-piercing incident in *Speed*, following so closely upon the scene in which a hired gun blows a hole through Gary Busey's ear in *The Firm*, and preceding by scant months Robert Downey Jr.'s having part of his ear blown off in *Natural Born Killers*, shows that we have reached a watershed in the history of cinema, signifying that auscultatory trauma has now become a staple in motion pictures made in this country. In recent years, ears have been severed in films as varied as *Blue Velvet*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Vincent & Theo*, and ears have been bitten or gnawed upon in *The Godfather, Part III* and *A Perfect World*. But none of these films was a huge hit like *The Firm* or *Speed*. *Godfather III* and *A Perfect World* were commercial disappointments at the box office, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Blue Velvet* and *Vincent & Theo* are cult classics that have garnered far more fame than dollars, and *Last Temptation* was a marginal hit, nothing more.

Now, however, with the awesome success of *Speed*, whose very first violent act involves the brutalization of the human ear, and *The Firm*, we may very well have entered into a new era of cinema—the Ear Era—where tympanic trauma will be perceived by the general public as an acceptable, and perhaps even desirable, component of the moviegoing experience. In years to come, ear-piercing, ear-chopping, ear-slicing, ear-filleting, ear-microwaving and ear-masticating incidents may become so popular that they will replace head butts and kicks to the genitals as the single most popular cliché in the lexicon of popular cinema. Of course, as is often the case with my theories, I could be wrong about this.

The purpose of this essay is fourfold:

1) To discuss the history of auricular atrocity in motion pictures and pay homage to trailblazers in the idiom.

2) To draw attention to the different types of ear mutilation in motion pictures and stress the diverse cin-

ematic objectives for which the savagery is utilized.

3) To draw a crucial distinction between films in which acoustic abuse is a peripheral, secondary element and those films in which the mistreatment of the human ear becomes a centrifugal force so powerful that no one can talk about the movie without mentioning "the ear scene."

4) To discuss the emerging role of children as ear mutilators in American cinema and speculate whether biting another actor's ear at an early age is a good career move.

First, a bit of history. From the time movies were invented until David Lynch hooked up with Dennis Hopper, ears did not play much of a role in the cinema. Actors used them to hear with, and that was about it. Occasionally, somebody would get yanked around by an earlobe, or have his or her ear affectionately nibbled on, but for the most part ears, like ulnae and femurs, were left pretty much alone. The single, shining exception to this was Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life*, the much admired, albeit atrocious, 1956 film in which Kirk Douglas, playing the tortured Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, chops off his ear after an argument with Anthony Quinn, playing Paul Gauguin. This ponderous load of crap, bloated with every cliché about artists ever concocted, features the predictably dimwitted Douglas as a Dutch doofus who spends the entire film smoking a pipe and dashing around, with his forearms akimbo, looking for all the world like van Gogh the Sailor Man. The decision to chop off his ear is precipitated by a huge argument with Quinn about the role of emotion in painting, though there is abundant evidence—Douglas's clutching the sides of his head just before he performs the autoatrocity—that he has in fact been driven to this act of supreme desperation in the foolish hope of escaping from the soaring violin strains of Miklos Rozsa's unbearable score.

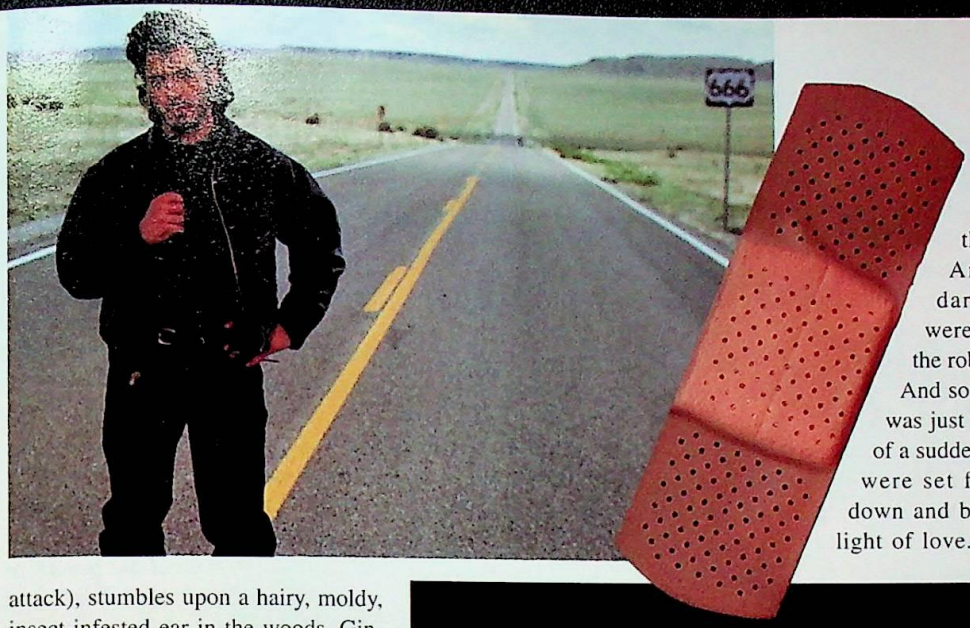
Actually, trouble has been brewing between Gauguin and van Gogh ever since Quinn first showed up at Douglas's rural French house and started complaining about Douglas's cooking and housekeeping. In this sense, *Lust for Life* can be viewed as a Post-Impressionist, monaural *The Odd Couple*, with Paul Gauguin/Anthony Quinn playing the role of the meticulous Felix Unger while Vincent van Gogh/Kirk Douglas plays the part of the slovenly Oscar Madison. Now that I think of it, both the *Odd Couple* movie and "The Odd Couple" TV series, good as they were, would have been a whole lot more enjoyable had either Walter Matthau or Jack Klugman chopped off his ear and walked around the apartment with a bandage wrapped around his head. Though in the best of all possible worlds, *both* of Jack Lemmon's *and* Tony Randall's ears would have come off.

Although *Lust for Life* earns innumerable cultural brownie points for being the first major motion picture to feature a severed ear in a prominent thematic position, it is not a very satisfactory mutilation scene, particularly when compared with subsequent ear slashings, such as those in *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *Reservoir Dogs*. For one, we do not actually see the ear get chopped off with the straight razor; Douglas performs the home surgery off-camera, and even after the ear has come off, we only see its reflection in the mirror. More disturbing still, one never gets a very clear sense of why van Gogh was driven to committing this act of self-transmogrification rather than taking things out on someone else. Did he think he was punishing Gauguin by chopping off his own ear? Was he cutting off his ear to spite Gauguin's face? Why didn't he simply chop off Gauguin's ear? Or Gauguin's nose? Another thing: If investors in the late '80s were willing to pay as much as $36 million for a bunch of sunflowers painted by a man most famous for cutting off his own ear, think how much that same painting would be worth if he'd cut off his dick.

The fact that three of my friends inaccurately recalled a scene in which an ear is torn off in a movie scripted by Oliver Stone (*Midnight Express*) lends credence to the theory that Stone is the victim of a vast conspiracy to make him appear an even more depraved sadist than he actually is. Or at least it did until Stone made *Natural Born Killers*.

Let us leave *Starry, Starry Nightmare* now and examine the subsequent history of cinematic auricular trauma. From 1956 until 1986, the human ear, as a focal point of dramatic action, vanished from the silver screen. Why? Your guess is as good as mine, but good taste can certainly not be the explanation. For whatever the reason, detached ears did not take center stage in motion pictures again until 1986, when David Lynch released his cult creep classic *Blue Velvet*. The movie opens with placid, reassuring images of Middle-American suburban life: attentive crossing guards, friendly firemen, happy schoolchildren, white picket fences, a man having a heart attack. But then a shadow falls across the screen as preppy Kyle MacLachlan, back from college to visit his ailing dad (the guy who had the heart

opening spread: illustration by david peters; photo: archive photos; top right: sidney baldwin; bottom right: kobal collection



attack), stumbles upon a hairy, moldy, insect-infested ear in the woods. Gingerly inserting it in a plain brown-paper bag, MacLachlan transports it to the police station where the chief of detectives tells him, "Yes, that's a human ear, all right."

This is where *Blue Velvet* parts company with *Lust for Life*. In *Lust for Life*, the audience knows all along that the ear-chopping scene is coming sooner or later, because we all know that the real-life Vincent van Gogh did actually chop off his ear. But after the ear has come off, the moviemakers drop the whole unsavory subject; they don't try to play it for laughs. Not so in *Blue Velvet*, where the bodyless ear becomes a powerful element in the movie.

"What can you tell about a person from their ear?" MacLachlan asks the town coroner. "Are you the one who found the ear?" Laura Dern subsequently asks the Kylemeister in one of the great pickup lines of all time. And when the coroner tells MacLachlan, "We'll check the morgue records, but I don't recall anything coming in minus an ear. The person may still very well be alive somewhere," it signals to the audience that something very troubling is taking place here. Surely, the coroner is suggesting, anyone unlucky enough to have his ear cut off, or anyone unlucky enough to have a loved one whose ear had been cut off, would immediately report it to the police. This isn't the sort of injury—say, a boil, or herpes—that one simply ignores.

In *Blue Velvet*, the severed ear also functions on a metaphorical level, when we are introduced to Isabella Rossellini, a mysterious lounge lizardess whose husband has been abducted—and had his ear chopped off—by the sex maniac Dennis Hopper. Here, the severed ear is important for two very different reasons. One, after listening to Isabella's brutal rendition of the Bobby Vinton classic "Blue Velvet" during her nightclub act, it becomes apparent to the audience that she will never be able to raise any serious ransom money if she has to depend on her voice. Two, only a person who was missing at least one ear could possibly derive any pleasure from listening to her singing.

Ears also play an important role in *Blue Velvet* because without them, Kyle MacLachlan would not be able to make any sense out of the dream Laura Dern describes to him after he asks why there is so much trouble in the world. As she puts it:

"In the dream, there was our world. And the world was dark because there weren't any robins. And the robins represented love. And so along this time there was just this darkness, and all of a sudden thousands of robins were set free, and they flew down and brought this blinding light of love. And it seemed like that love would be the only thing that would make any difference. And it did. So I guess it means there is trouble till the robins come."

Laura, as usual, is a *big* help.

Repairing an Oversight: Screenwriter Oliver Stone did not include ear mutilation in 1978's *Midnight Express* (left), but director Stone did include it in *Natural Born Killers* (far left).

From *Blue Velvet*, we naturally segue into Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Why? Because *Blue Velvet* is a movie about a small town with big problems where someone gets their ear cut off, and it also contains a scene where a likable young man (MacLachlan) is kissed on the lips by a creepy actor he would prefer not to be kissed by (Hopper), just as *The Last Temptation of Christ* is a movie about a small town with big problems where someone gets their ear cut off, and it contains a scene where a likable young man (Willem Dafoe) is kissed on the lips by a creepy actor he would prefer not to be kissed by (Harvey Keitel).

But first, some indispensable Biblical background. There are four different versions of Christ's arrest on the Mount of Olives on Holy Thursday (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) but only St. Luke's version of the Gospel describes the scene where Christ miraculously reattaches the right ear of the High Priest's servant after St. Peter has chopped it off. Perhaps because the ear-cutting scene did not go over so well in *Lust for Life*, or perhaps because they were basing their screenplays on the Gospels written by the other Evangelists, neither Nicholas Ray in his 1961 *King* of *Kings* nor George Stevens in his 1965 *The Greatest Story Ever Told* include the ear-cutting scene. (In Stevens's defense, a director forced to cast John Wayne as the Roman centurion at the foot of the cross, intoning the words, "Surely, this was the son of God" is already trying the audience's patience enough without confusing the issue through audial anguish.)

But clearly the ear-lopping incident was far too wonderful an opportunity for the Roman Catholic Mob Director Marty Scorsese to pass up. Actually, Scorsese's ear-chopping scene is relatively tasteful, considering what immediately precedes it: Harvey Keitel, cast as a red-haired Judas with a Bensonhurst accent, kissing Willem Dafoe (Jesus of Nazareth) full on the lips. After witnessing a scene as unsavory as that—Jesus seems plenty surprised by the kiss—it's hardly surprising that one of Christ's disciples should whip out his knife and hack off the ear of the High Priest's hapless servant. Interestingly, the disciple uses a nifty uppercut to lop the ear off, creating the impression that this may not be the first time he's done this sort of thing. The ear fragment comes off cleanly, bloodlessly, and tumbles to the ground where Christ, who also seems to be used to this sort of thing, picks it up, reattaches it, and then goes on his merry way being taken into custody and crucified. Inexcusably, the man with the restored ear doesn't even thank Jesus. One other thing: unlike the revolting, hairy ear in *Blue Velvet*, the ear fragment that Dafoe retrieves from the ground in *Last Temptation* looks incredibly cheesy. I mean, where's the blood? What, were you saving it for Joe Pesci in *GoodFellas*, Marty?

This might be a good opportunity to say a few words about Scorsese's overall mutilative technique. The first time I saw *The Last Temptation of Christ* I was very impressed by the low-key way in which Scorsese handled this incident, which, in the hands of a lesser director—say Oliver Stone—could have been pretty nauseating, and which, in the hands of a lesser director, Quentin Tarantino, *was* pretty nauseating. Then I had second thoughts. There's something very unsettling about a movie where somebody gets his ear cut off and nobody thinks that it's that big a deal. Say what you want about *Reservoir Dogs*, but when Michael Madsen lops off the cop's ear, the victim at least reacts like something pretty horrible has just happened to him.

Contrast this with the relatively muted reaction to the auricular atrocity in *Last Temptation*. The disciple whips out his knife, lops off the ear, and the victim sort of groans, but he doesn't descend into the kind of full-fledged hysteria we see in *Reservoir Dogs* and he doesn't even get as upset as Joe Mantegna seems to be in *Godfather III*, when he merely gets his ear *bitten*. All in all, I think Scorsese should be censured for pussyfooting around in this scene, and if he ever gets to do one of those restored director's cuts like Francis Ford Coppola or Sam Peckinpah or Kevin Costner, I hope he'll add in some footage he must have lying around somewhere of the victim going completely fucking ballistic. Let's face it: if you got your ear sliced off on the Mount of Olives while you were arresting a man who claimed to be the King of the Jews, I know you'd make a pretty big stink about it. God knows, I would.

I don't want to make too much of this whole ear-lopping business but I must admit that it's always been the thing that prevents me from accepting St. Luke's account of the events that transpired on Holy Thursday as gospel truth. What really rings false is the reaction of the Roman soldiers after Christ has reattached the ear. Put yourself in their situation: if you were sent out in the middle of the night to arrest a man who claimed to be the son of God, and one of his confederates chopped off one of your confederate's ears, and then the man claiming to be visiting divinity miraculously reattached it, don't you think you'd find yourself saying something like: "Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't this guy just surgically reattach Maximus Minimus's ear without the benefit of any known medical technology? And if so, don't you think it's a little bit risky to try bringing this guy in, armed only with short daggers, tiny spears and these fey little tunics?"

Similarly, right after Christ is taken into custody, he is interrogated by a rather ponce-y Pontius Pilate, played by David Bowie, who gets a bit flip with Him. Bowie, sporting what appears to be a First Century A.D. Beatles mop top, treats Christ rather dismissively, remarking, "It's also said that you do miracles. Is this good magic or bad magic? Could we have some kind of... eh... demonstration? I mean, could you do a trick for me now?"

By this point, if I'm Jesus Christ, I'm probably going to find myself saying, "Look, asshole, I'm the guy who just reattached a human ear that had been lopped off somebody's head, and you're a two-bit Roman bureaucrat who's been banished to a dead-end job in Judea. Do you really think I'm the sort of person you should be fucking with?"

But, of course, I am not Jesus Christ, so I'll have to let the issue drop and start talking about Andy Garcia.

Garcia is our next subject of interest because of the unsettling scene in *The Godfather, Part III* where he takes a huge bite out of Joe Mantegna's ear. Mantegna, it will be recalled by the three of us who saw the picture, plays a mobster who has inherited most of Michael Corleone's empire *after* Al Pacino decides to go legit. Unwisely, he turns up at Pacino's house the day the Don is being

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After several years of slow emergence as the newest progeny of an English acting dynasty, Natasha Richardson won a Tony nomination, married Liam Neeson and landed a starring role in *Nell*.

the New Nata

by stephen rebello

A sleek and burnished Natasha Richardson leans toward me over a late lunch in a private sector of her favorite Carnegie Hall-adjacent trattoria. "I spent the morning making myself feel beautiful—I had my face cleaned and I had my nails done and I had a pedicure," she says. I decide to joke with her. "For me, Natasha? I'm flattered." This teases from her a thick, languorous laugh exactly like the one with which Vanessa Redgrave, her mother, slays me whenever I watch and re-watch *Blowup* or *Isadora*. Gazing up doe-eyed over a glass of Pellegrino, tongue firmly in cheek, Natasha purrs, "Well, I *did* know the minute I saw you that I was terribly sorry I am married, but... I was actually making myself beautiful because tomorrow I'm flying to visit my husband in Scotland. Your skin is supposed to look very pink when you're done. Does it?"

Oh, supremely pink. And Natasha's husband—that's Liam Neeson, in case you've been boycotting newspaper, magazine and TV gossip coverage for the last few months—will probably agree. That's the same Neeson, of course, who won critical raves playing Oskar Schindler, and with whom Richardson is about to be seen in *Nell* as one of two doctors baffled by backwoods wild-child Jodie Foster. That's the Neeson, too, with whom she just bought a rambling farmhouse, and with whom she plans more co-starring ventures. Richardson met Neeson when they starred together on Broadway in a glitteringly successful revival of Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, and she left a marriage to be with him.

LiamandNatasha. Uttered as one six-syllable word these days in hip circles. Inextricably linked, they're the beautiful, bright young couple of the instant. Arousing more curiosity than Kenneth and Emma. Less funky and kooky than Renny and Geena. More stately, somehow, than Tom and Nicole. Liam boasts a strong reputation as an actor (*Husbands and Wives* and *Ethan Frome* among many others,

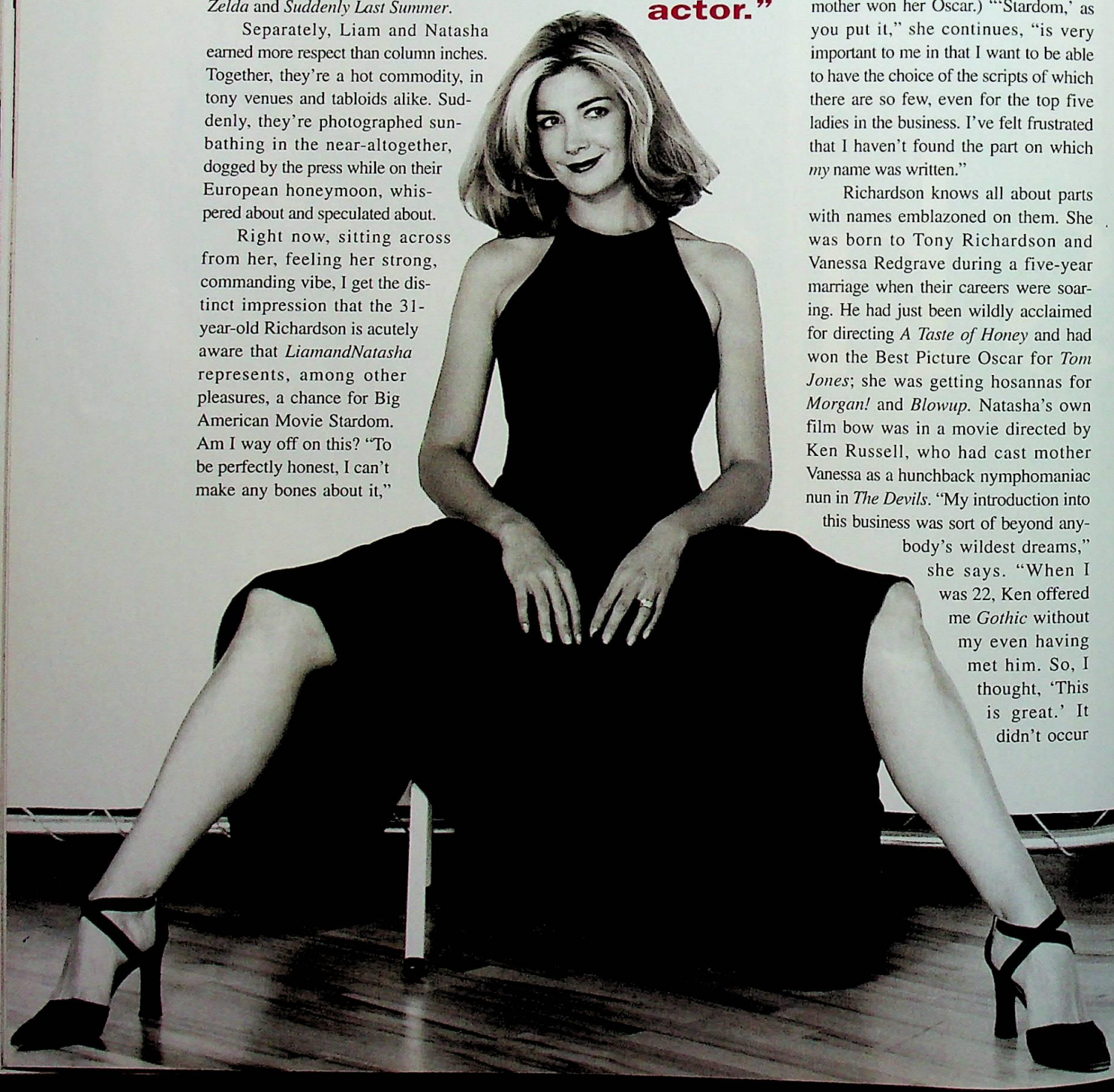
sha

before *Schindler*) and an equally formidable one as a ladies' man. Natasha hails from the hallowed entertainment dynasty that boasts grandfather Michael Redgrave, grandmother Rachel Kempson, mother Vanessa, aunt Lynn, uncle Corin, father Tony Richardson and sister Joely Richardson—back off, Barrymores—and has achieved a certain cult status with solid performances in an oddball assortment of independent films, from *Patty Hearst* to *The Handmaid's Tale*, and meant-to-be-classy TV fare like *Zelda* and *Suddenly Last Summer*.

Separately, Liam and Natasha earned more respect than column inches. Together, they're a hot commodity, in tony venues and tabloids alike. Suddenly, they're photographed sunbathing in the near-altogether, dogged by the press while on their European honeymoon, whispered about and speculated about.

Right now, sitting across from her, feeling her strong, commanding vibe, I get the distinct impression that the 31-year-old Richardson is acutely aware that *LiamandNatasha* represents, among other pleasures, a chance for Big American Movie Stardom. Am I way off on this? "To be perfectly honest, I can't make any bones about it," the actress asserts. "A lot of the movies I've done were perfectly well-received. Some of them were disappointing, some of them were art house movies for a very limited audience. Consequently, I found it frustrating that I wasn't given the freedom of choice in the parts that I wanted to play in bigger movies. When I was in drama school, the types of movies that made me aspire to be an actress were, first, Judy Garland movies, then *Coal Miner's Daughter*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Julia*." (The last one, of course, was the film for which Natasha's mother won her Oscar.) "'Stardom,' as you put it," she continues, "is very important to me in that I want to be able to have the choice of the scripts of which there are so few, even for the top five ladies in the business. I've felt frustrated that I haven't found the part on which *my* name was written."

"There are so many reasons I never, never wanted to be involved with an actor. That was before I met *my* actor."



Richardson knows all about parts with names emblazoned on them. She was born to Tony Richardson and Vanessa Redgrave during a five-year marriage when their careers were soaring. He had just been wildly acclaimed for directing *A Taste of Honey* and had won the Best Picture Oscar for *Tom Jones*; she was getting hosannas for *Morgan!* and *Blowup*. Natasha's own film bow was in a movie directed by Ken Russell, who had cast mother Vanessa as a hunchback nymphomaniac nun in *The Devils*. "My introduction into this business was sort of beyond anybody's wildest dreams," she says. "When I was 22, Ken offered me *Gothic* without my even having met him. So, I thought, 'This is great.' It didn't occur

to me that I was [ever] going to have to go through the often humiliating process of auditioning. I got a little spoiled at the beginning."

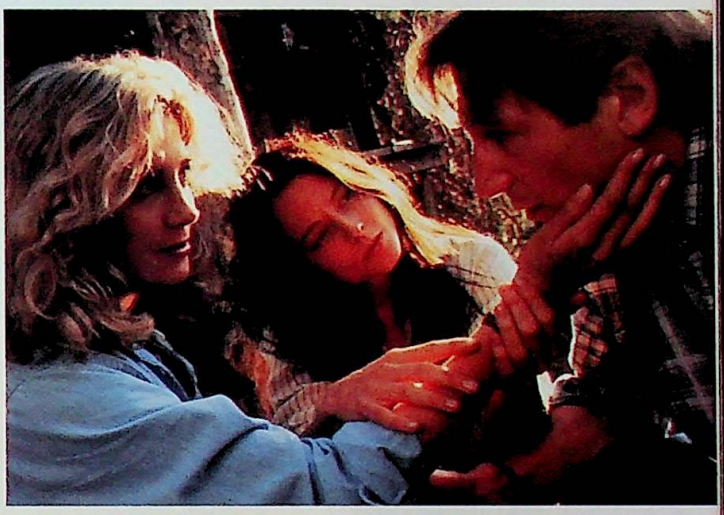
The bizarre *Gothic* was not, perhaps, the sort of debut that makes career doors swing open. "Hearing stories about Marlon Brando's auditioning for *The Godfather* or Richard Harris turning up as a waiter in restaurants and bombarding the makers of *Camelot* with telegrams because they wanted Richard Burton for the movie, not him, doesn't make it any better," says Richardson. "I have to go *after* parts, like everybody else, because 'somebody's' not convinced."

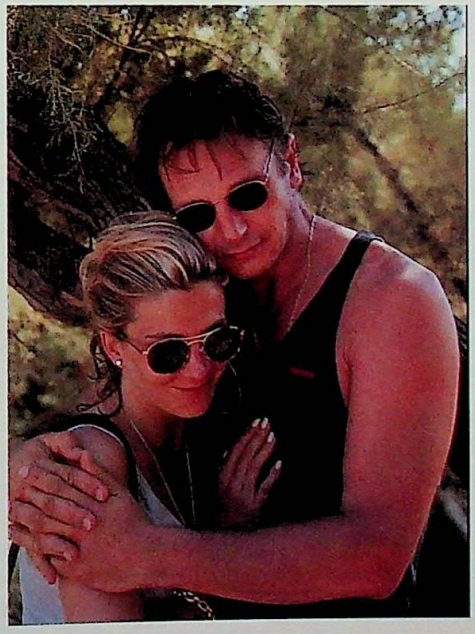
Was Richardson helped in landing the role of the uptight, got-it-all-together psychiatrist in *Nell* because her suddenly in-demand husband had been cast as one of the movie's leads? She shakes her head in a resolute no. "I read it before Liam was doing it, and Jodie Foster and I have the same agent. I felt passionately about the script and thought, 'Oh, I just want to play this woman and be in this story.' Liam and I decided it was something we'd both like to do, individually and together. We knew that if one of us didn't get it, it didn't mean that the other was not going to do it. It's not like we were in a package. The character was this person who is so determined to be perfect that she can't really open up and risk not being perfect. I thought, 'I know this so well,' because I've been through this myself, knocking those walls down. The big difference between me and her is that she is not in touch with her emotions and I am too in touch with my emotions.

"Liam was offered it and decided to do it," Richardson recalls, sighing. "Many other fine actresses were up for my role, so I went through the casting process, which was quite lengthy and painful, particularly because this was something that I wanted to do so much. I knew my partner was going to be in it, whether I got to do it or not. That can create an imbalance in a relationship. You're supposedly equals and then one of you is very much *not* an equal."

Richardson falls silent, as if ruminating on the notion of equality and fairness in a business, not to mention a world, that is based on neither. For an instant, her perfect posture and coolly elegant gaze seem to reveal a hairline crack. Which she promptly smooths over. "It really taught me a lesson," she concludes. "In the past, I guess, I'd been sort of insecure and arrogant at the same time. When I was growing up, it would be like, 'Why would they want me to read, goddamn it? Why don't they just look at my work? Don't they realize that I'm a good actress, which means I can play different kinds of parts?' I really put myself on the line for *Nell*. I'd rather be asked than do the asking. But who wouldn't? Happily, this one worked out."

Others haven't. Richardson freely admits she hungered for such roles as Debra Winger's in *The Sheltering Sky*, Michelle Pfeiffer's in *The Age of Innocence* and Meg Ryan's in *Sleepless in Seattle*. "The truth is, I've rarely gotten things for which I've read. It's also the truth that I took a little detour because maybe I was a little too picky about a couple of projects that I turned down and should have done. I feel sidetracked. One of those projects in particular turned out to be amazingly successful. And no, Steve, I won't mention it," she says firmly. If rumors can be believed, it was *Howards End* she passed up. "I will mention that I wanted to do *Sheltering Sky* desperately," she adds, "and I met Bertolucci a few times about that. I wrote him a long, heartfelt letter about why I felt that I understood this person in a special way. I know where I made my mistake, though, if I made one. I thought, 'If he wants to see me so many times, he wants to see something *different*.' I didn't need to do 'different.'"

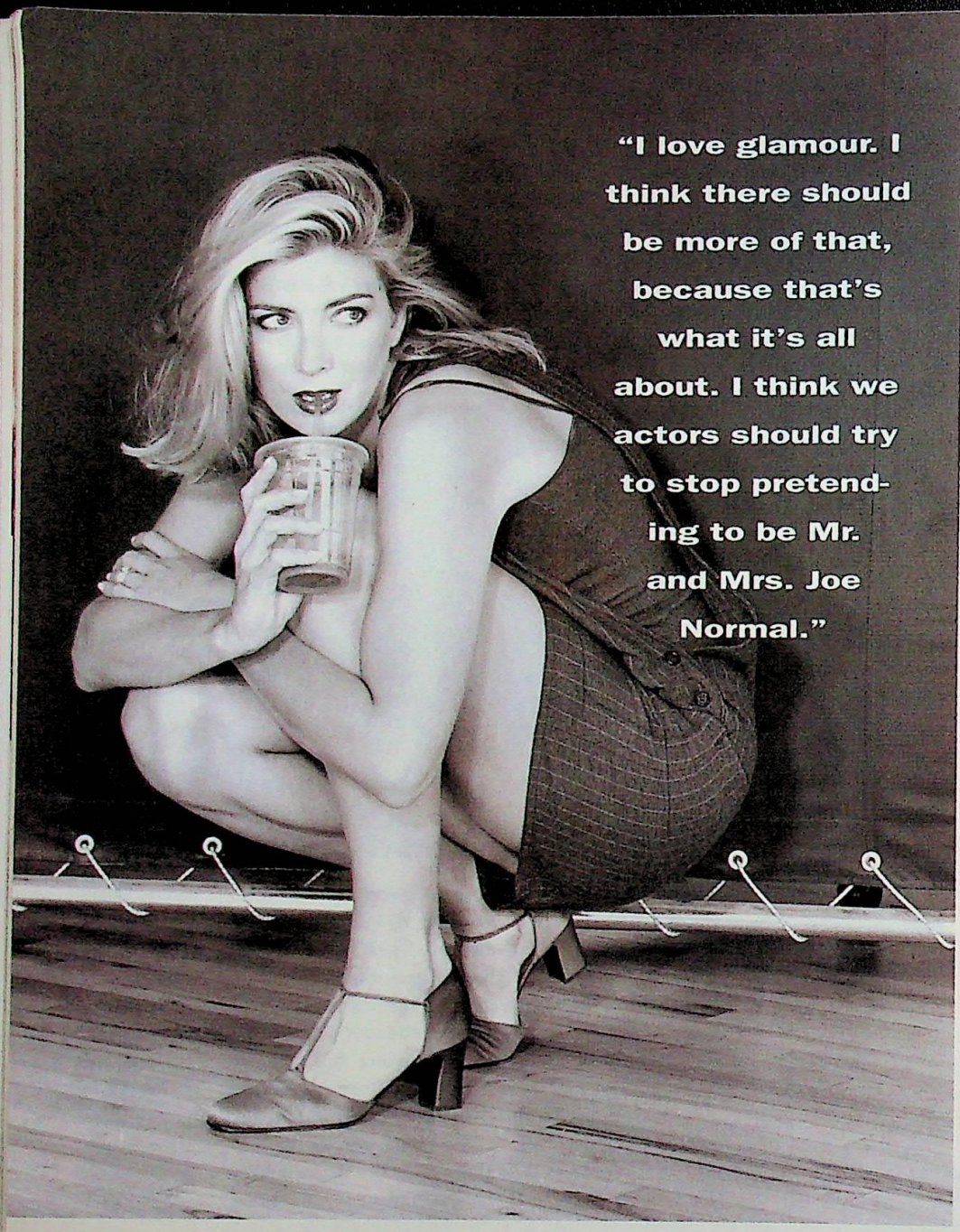




Working Couple: Richardson and husband Liam Neeson posing for the paparazzi (left) and starring (with Jodie Foster) in *Nell* (above).

The event that made a tangible difference in the roles to which Richardson could aspire was the critical triumph of her performance on Broadway in *Anna Christie*, in which she played the waterfront prostitute who finds her heart in her love for a young seaman—a role that launched Greta Garbo in her move from silents to talkies, thereby ensuring her movie immortality. Richardson won a Tony Award nomination for her work. "I'm not a great theater fan," she says, to my surprise. "I don't go very often, mostly because I'm too often disappointed and there is nothing more claustrophobic than being in the theater when it isn't great. What was wonderful was being on that stage and feeling the audience respond to something you knew was special. It did give

photography by bob frame • styling: fiona williams • hair: john barrett for rexkai • makeup: tina beck • clothing: (first spread) jewelry and velvet gown: akhy; (second spread) dress: giorgio armani; shoes: calvin klein; (last spread) jumper: akhy; shoes: calvin klein • see the buyer's guide for shopping details; top right: andrew cooper; bottom right: james anderson/sygma


"I love glamour. I think there should be more of that, because that's what it's all about. I think we actors should try to stop pretending to be Mr. and Mrs. Joe Normal."

you a kick going into the theater knowing there were theater scalpers selling tickets. It was like being at a rock concert."

Simultaneously with success came all the paparazzi flash that attended Richardson's romance with Liam Neeson. The two have been hounded by the paparazzi, particularly since they got married. "When Liam and I were on our honeymoon, that was intrusive," she says, her gaze turning to hardened steel. "It's intrusive at those moments when I don't want to be on show," she observes. "Sometimes, I don't look good, I don't want to be an actress right now, I don't want to be known. When I work is when I feel special. When I'm not working, I don't feel special at all. I remember being next to Liam and realizing, 'Well, maybe I can't do this with the same freedom anymore,' because you feel that everybody is watching. But I'm not going to have to deal with it on the Tom Cruise level."

Except sometimes. "We were on a beach and changing to have some lunch when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a telephoto lens. I thought, 'Oh, man, they're going to take one of those awful shots,' so we walked up to him, and he said, 'Please, can I take a shot?' Liam said, 'No,' but I said, 'Let's give him a shot. Otherwise, we don't know what he's got and whatever he's got, he'll use.' We got followed around Venice, too, and we weren't even aware of it most of the time. Until we saw some of the pictures."

Did she ever fight becoming involved with an actor, especially knowing so well their internal dynamics, their vanity, insecurity, madness?

"Oh, Steve, I could write you a book on why not to get involved with an actor," she says, the glint in her eyes suggesting that she could write *several* books. I'll settle for a couple of good reasons. She ticks items off on her slender fingers. "Because anybody who is good at what they do gets totally obsessed by it to the exclusion of other people. Because of the physical distance often involved. Because careers sometimes move at different rates. Because, oh, God, there are so many reasons I never, never wanted to be involved with an actor. Ever." Then, sliding back in her chair with a deliriously satisfied grin, she adds, "That was before I met *my* actor," and lets fly with a whiskey and honey-throated, shoulder-shaking laugh.

Richardson recalls a moment with Neeson early on when she thought she might be looking at the rest of her life. She says, very softly, "Our relationship developed in stages. We met when we were doing the play and had never met before that. I guess I only really knew that this was for the rest of my life on my wedding day."

Wasn't she at all wary of his reputation as a man who is catnip to women? "Until I got to know him, I was very daunted by that reputation. But I was too in love to be as sensible as all that. And then I got to know him. I got to know that you mustn't believe what you hear. I learned also that he loves women in a genuine way and sometimes that's misinterpreted. I love that he loves women. And, loving him, I can understand why women adore him."

I wondered whether Richardson has ever before felt so much in love before Neeson. "Well, you know, I was married before Liam," she reminds me. "I loved my husband and still love him very much. But obviously, it goes with-

out saying that I just got married to Liam and I believe we are going to be together for the rest of our lives. I didn't really feel these different kinds of love and intensity before. This, this is umm . . . this is as deep as it goes."

I tell Richardson I've heard a few people comment that Neeson, by many accounts one of the nicest and most decent people in the business, has "changed" since *Schindler's List*. True? She fires back: "Not at all. Not at all. Yes, it's affected him. Of course, it's affected him. It's a big change and he's still adjusting, realizing that, in some ways, he has more responsibility and less freedom in this business. Those are big changes, but not at all changes in terms of ego. There are people who surround you—whether it's people who try socially or in a work situation to toady up. You just have to have very strong antennae out for who those people are."

Tales from the set of *Rob Roy*, the intimate historical epic that Neeson is shooting in Scotland opposite Jessica Lange, Eric Stoltz and John Hurt, have suggested that Richardson and Neeson can be a formidable force, a flying wedge with a very sharp blade, when it comes to protecting each other's interests. Does Richardson pipe up when she feels that her husband isn't, say, being handled the way she thinks he should be? "If I felt something was intruding on him and he was being used in some way," she says, "or that his good nature was being taken advantage of, I might say something to him. We do take a strong interest in each other, not just in terms of career choices. But we're two actors and, contrary to what people think, that makes you each other's harshest critics."

Perhaps because Neeson is considered by some to be more easy-going and less articulate than Richardson, there are those who view her as domineering—the bad cop to Neeson's strapping, good-natured good cop. As someone who, perhaps, reminds her husband that he is entitled to movie star treatment. "God, it's that bad?" she says, wide-eyed, when I mention this to her. "What Liam and I have very much in common, having been theater actors, is that we don't have to be pampered. The truth is that there are some things that bug him that wouldn't bug me at all and I'm like, 'Why are you upset over that?' And there are some things that would bug me that wouldn't bug him. All actors have things that intrude on their work, which is so dependent on mood and concentration. If there are things that get in the way, distracting you, that can be incredibly frustrating. Certainly, he's very laid-back and I'm much more energized. He can let things wash over him and I'm more vulnerable. I can get affected by little things."

Such little things as? "I'm too critical of myself," she asserts. "I'm working on that because if you're too critical, it means you control things too much and that's not interesting. Sometimes you just have to do it. I've been working in the last couple of years on just doing it, not trying to come down so hard on myself when it doesn't happen the way I want it to happen. Without sounding too weird, I feel that whatever pain I've been through in my life enables me to connect with somebody else's journey and to be able to share that with an audience. To unzipper myself emotionally. That's what it's about for me."

Does Richardson, despite her career ambitions, want to raise a family with Neeson? "I know too many people who do it successfully to believe it's not possible for actors to raise wonderful families," she says. "Of course, it's tough for women because it means taking at least a year out, but I would very much like a family. I just hope they're not actors, that's all."

How does Richardson, who grew up surrounded by actors, view actors? "We aren't to be trusted. The fundamental thing about actors, apart from the selfishness, is that we are deeply insecure people. Very insecure, very vulnerable. Acting is a glorious, wonderful, terribly spoiling job and it's sometimes glamorous. I love glamour. I think there should be more of that, because that's what it's all about. I think we actors should try to stop pretending to be Mr. and Mrs. Joe Normal."

And how does she view her interior self, her deepest, non-actor nature? "I'm a helpless, helpless romantic in a lot of areas," she answers, immediately. "I like my home to look nice. I love

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People are talking about JOSHUA REDMAN. And they are saying some superb things.

Best Jazz Artist —Rolling Stone 1994 Critics' Poll

"Joshua Redman could be this decade's savior of jazz." —Paul Keegan, GQ

"After two or three notes, he was one of my favorite musicians ever." —Pat Metheny

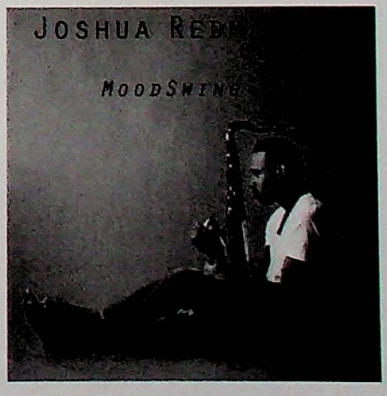
"The most impressive young tenor saxophonist in 15 years." —Lee Jeske, NY Post

"The most exciting, interesting and inventive saxophonist I've heard in some years." —David Sanborn

"I confess an almost irrational pleasure in his skill. It answers a need I didn't know I had." —Gary Giddens, Village Voice

"He expresses brilliance, depth and beauty far beyond his age." —Charlie Haden

"Behold the future of the tenor sax." —GQ



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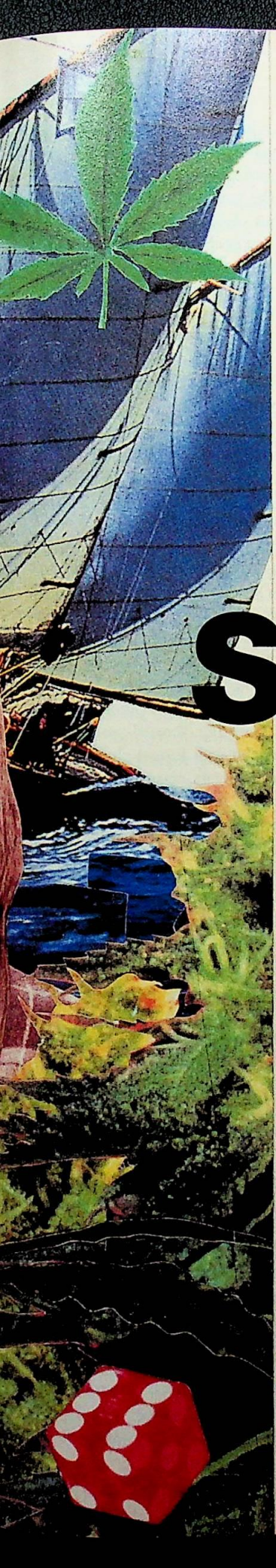


If crap like *Natural Born Killers* and *I Love Trouble* makes it to the screen, why not one of these far superior scripts?

the 10 Best *Unproduced* Screenplays

by stephen rebello

I wish I had 10 bucks for every time someone warned me against doing this story. "You won't find 10 great unproduced screenplays the way you used to," predicted one agent who knew that I had made three previous treks into Hollywood's cobweb-covered Land of the Unmade. A top producer warned, "We make so many movies now, practically *everything* gets made." Oh, really?

Having cited on past Top 10 lists then-unmade screenplays by such estimable writers as Steven Zaillian, Bruce Joel Rubin, Nicholas Kazan, Becky Johnston, Robin Swicord, Abraham Polonsky and Walter Newman, I've learned that many an impressive script turns into an unimpressive movie.

Yet, how many recent movies—aside from, say, *Schindler's List*, *Forrest Gump*, *Fearless*, *Ed Wood*, *The Ref*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*— even began with memorable, let alone superlative scripts?

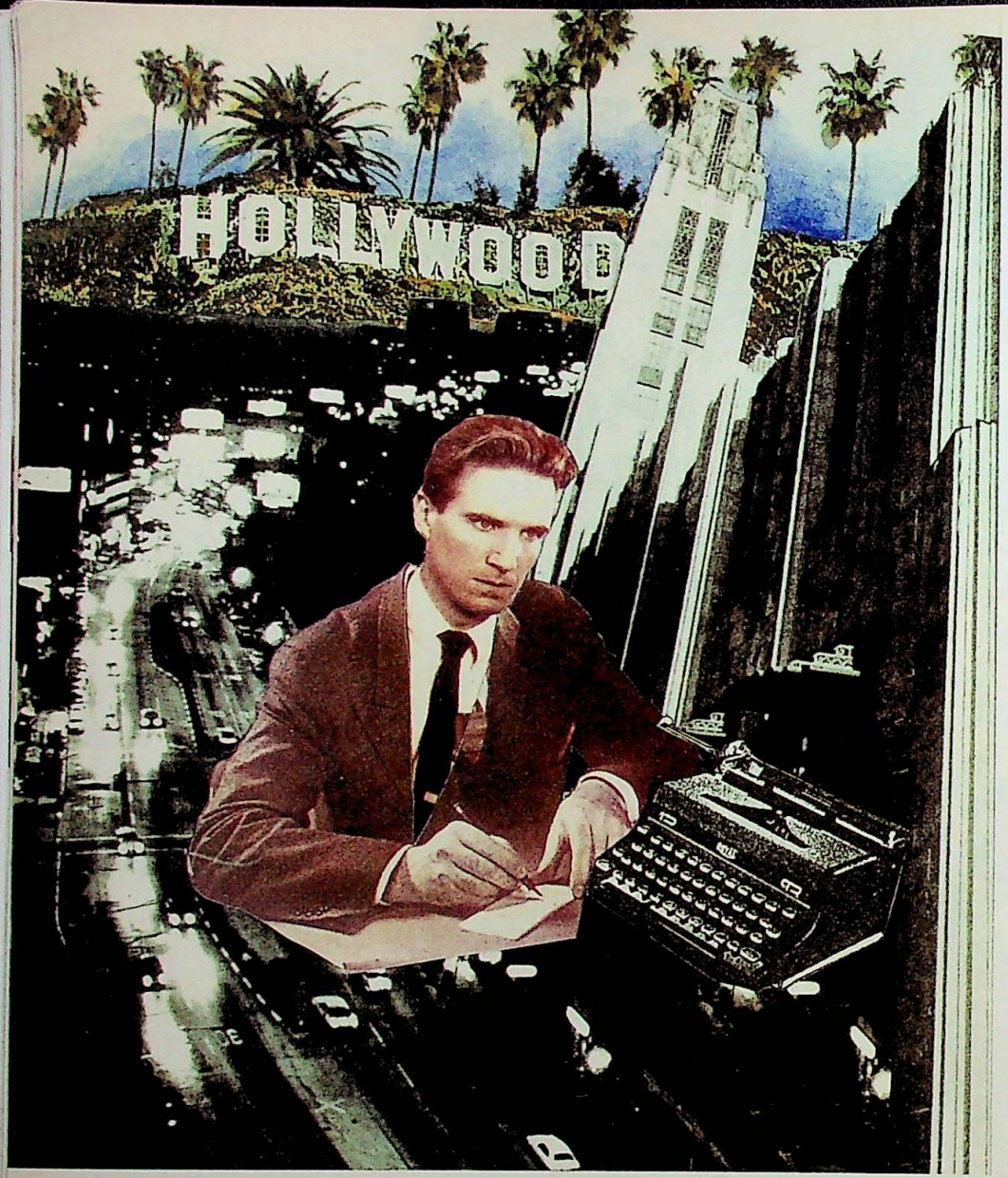
To find the screenplays for this 10 Best list, I read roughly 70 scripts. The best of the best boasted solid story-telling, construction, dialogue, characters and compelling themes. The bottom line is: any of these scripts in the hands of the *right* moviemakers is eminently worthy of being taken to the big screen.

1. *The Pair-A-Dice* by David Webb Peoples

David Webb Peoples's script for *Unforgiven* provided a sturdy foundation for a towering Western. *The Pair-A-Dice* is funkier, a wayward, loony original comedy of clashing social classes. If its twisty characters, perilous shifts in tone and breezily idiosyncratic structure were realized by the right filmmakers, *The Pair-A-Dice* would make for a one-of-a-kind movie.

At center stage struts Pick, a sexy, sociopathic opportunist with arms full

Perfect Casting: Brad Pitt and Gwyneth Paltrow as the couple lost in paradise in David Webb Peoples's *The Pair-A-Dice*.



Choice Part: As the academic in search of a Hollywood legend in Mark Allen Smith's *Black and White*, no one would be better suited than Ralph Fiennes.

of tattoos and a head full of dreams of goofball grandiosity. Fresh from doing time for a drug heist, Pick gets dumped by his wife and lights out on the Pacific in the ramshackle "Pair-of-Dice" sailboat he's bought from a prison buddy. Clueless about surviving the rigors of the high seas, he is partnered by Melody, a sexy, earth-shoe-and-granola type. Delightfully, unabashedly white trash, the duo drops anchor on a remote Pacific island where Pick plans to become a self-sustaining farmer—of marijuana, among other crops. "We won't need anything from off the island, nothing!" he tells Melody. "Except, like, luxury items. Art and antiques and shit. We import that stuff."

Peoples throws these two together on the tight little island with their polar opposites: Wingate, a moneyed, accomplished, ecologically-minded businessman (Robert Downey Jr. would be good), and Jonesy, his earthy, self-improvement-obsessed mate (Julianne Moore?). The couples spar, fraternize, swap recipes, go hilariously and, sometimes, frighteningly native, wreak ecological havoc, and, finally, bed each other—couplings that help lead to the strange disappearance of Wingate and Jonesy.

Here the script takes an unexpected *Rashomon*-type detour. In a trial sequence, scenes and dialogue we had earlier seen are retold and reinterpreted from the viewpoints of several witnesses, giving Peoples the opportunity to go to town with his gifts for creating vivid personalities with shifting motivations and for spinning a yarn that prickles with ominous subtext.

The lead character, described by another character in the script as a "walking penis," once attracted Kevin Costner. Now producer Laura Ziskin, whom 20th Century Fox recently signed to run a separate film unit, may have caught the attention of Brad Pitt with this role. Sounds like a perfect fit. My vote is Gwyneth Paltrow for the role of Melody.

2. *Vicky* by James Toback

Few moviemakers *get* obsession the way James Toback does. Known best for the brooding, volatile *Fingers*, which he directed as well as wrote, and for his sexy, volatile *Bugsy* screenplay, Toback excels in pungent, incisive dialogue and gracefully, aggressively shaped scenes. He wrote *Vicky* nearly 20 years ago, when George Cukor was planning to direct it. Although it is a witty, sweeping, sensual period piece constructed with formal elegance, it's also as strangely obsessive—and subversive—as anything one might expect from its writer.

Years back, Cukor had in mind Faye Dunaway and Cary Grant to act the two main characters in the saga of the extraordinary 19th-century true-life adventures of the ravishing Victoria Woodhull, who lived full-out the feminist and free-love principles she espoused. Vicky ran Manhattan's first woman-operated banking house, managed her own muckraking newspaper, was nominated for President of the United States by the great African-American leader Frederick Douglass (one of her lovers), got propositioned by President Ulysses S. Grant and bedded any number of beautiful men who caught her fancy, including multimillionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt and social-reforming, Bible-thumping hypocrite Henry Ward Beecher.

"Oh, I'm ready for anything. Everything," she enthuses to her first lover, early in the script. "I'm so ready to move, I have to tie rocks around my legs to keep from jumping." And jump she does, from a childhood spent in the

illustrations by peter nagy

sticks fleecing hayseeds with her spiritualist "powers," to marriage and children with a doctor addicted to whores and opium, to a New York liaison with a Marxist armchair anarchist, to partnership in and out of bed with the profane, larger-than-life magnate Vanderbilt. And that's where Vicky's saga just begins to get interesting.

In Toback's script, virtually each scene is a bravura set piece. His intensely vivid, charismatic heroine shows the passion, drive, gutsiness and ferocity of, say, Isadora Duncan, the French Lieutenant's Woman or Scarlett O'Hara. Toback writes women characters uncommonly well, and he's got hold of a wild one here. What actress wouldn't kill to play her?

In the '70s, *Vicky* stalled thanks to the critical bashing Cukor took for *The Blue Bird*. Toback has recently revised the screenplay, which, one hears, has caught the interest of Jodie Foster, Annette Bening and Michelle Pfeiffer, among others. Few roles read so "Best Actress" nomination-ready. Still fewer screenplays read so much like potential classics.

3. *Nevada* by Gary Tieche

A beautiful, mysterious stranger forces personal confrontations among the inhabitants of Silver City, a remote desert community run by women whose husbands and lovers work miles away and return home only on weekends. Strange, oddly compelling, unexpectedly funny, this script reads almost like what might have happened if Thelma had escaped to freedom without Louise. Screenwriter Tieche's lead character, Chrysty (think, say, Robin Wright), fires the curiosity of everyone she meets. Arriving apparently out of nowhere, she is adamantly silent about her past and becomes the object of lust, speculation and, finally, violence. Is she a refugee from an abusive relationship? Did she actually kill her husband and children? As the truth is revealed, so too are the dirty little secrets of the women and men of Silver City.

For Rip, a strapping good old boy with a wounded heart, Chrysty is an escape from a troubled marriage to a wife pregnant with a child he knows is not his. For Linny, a waif-like alcoholic, Chrysty is a sister, a life raft on a roiling sea. For Ruth, a wisecracking, salty dairy owner, she is a sexy distraction from her female lover of many years. For McGill, a religious zealot living with an almost unbearable guilt over a dead child, she is nothing less than the devil. Together, these characters comprise a terrific opportunity for a collection of showcase performances.

By the time Chrysty's past catches up with her, Tieche's moody, portentous script suggests something of *The Last Picture Show* in the way it pits flowing emotions against an arid terrain. Orchestrating both the tone and the performances will require a sympathetic director. If producers Midge Sanford, Sarah Pillsbury and Kathryn Arnold line up the right talent, they will put Tieche's eerie, touching *Nevada* on the map.

4. *Old Friends* by Mark Andrus

One of this town's sharpest, smartest, blackest comedy scripts is still up for grabs. Or is it still up for grabs *because* it's so sharp, smart and black? It certainly looks that way, because *Pretty Woman* producer Laura Ziskin has so far failed to persuade TriStar to greenlight the project, even though the script has attracted *Four Weddings and a Funeral* director Mike Newell with Ralph Fiennes, Kevin Kline and Holly Hunter as his stars.

It's little wonder that such good actors want to sink their teeth into these roles. They're corkers. First, there's a handsome, melancholy Manhattan painter who survives a savage and disfiguring gay-bashing in a robbery attempt engineered by a boy-for-hire "given" to him as a birthday present. Then, there's his nemesis, a misanthropic neighbor who spouts homophobic and racist cant while secretly writing best-selling romance novels and practicing random acts of kindness. And then there's the sexy, salt-of-the-earth waitress devoted to her autistic son. Add to these the opportunistic male hustler who precipitates the hero's tragedy and rebirth, as well as the acid-tongued African-American art gallery owner. Nifty roles, every one of them.

Like *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, scriptwriter Mark Andrus's *Old Friends* boasts a wonderfully off-center ensemble of characters, albeit a delightfully nastier mix. He provides for his creations left-field dialogue that suggests a ménage à trois of Preston Sturges, Nora Ephron and Paul Rudnick. In a pitch session, *Old Friends* could, at least superficially, sound a mite like *Neighbors*, the awful John Belushi/Dan Aykroyd movie of years ago. "It's about two next-door neighbors who so despise each other that..." one can almost hear an eager pitcher saying before the studio boss cuts him off dead with, "What *else* have you got?"

But unlike *Neighbors*, *this* movie is about people banding *together*, warily, with hostility, despite their differences. On the evidence of *Old Friends*, Andrus, whose only produced script to date is *Late for Dinner*, shows a mean talent for setting smartly spiky comedy in a landscape of urban angst and disarray. His characters wisecrack with zing, but he never lets the laughs diminish the material. Here's a rare, rueful comedy that's actually *about* something.

5. *Chains* by Anna Hamilton Phelan

For three years Oliver Stone's production company has come *that close* to filming this exceptional script. Phelan, known best for *Mask* and *Gorillas in the Mist*, tells a true-life tale about Johnny Spain, a young man born of a brief, racially mixed love affair, whose life experiences make for a powerful portrait of family love, political disenfranchisement and radicalization. This is a life that would be disbelieved if it were fiction, but as based on real events, proves enthralling. Phelan dramatizes without sentimentalizing the series of events in which Spain is nearly killed by Klan terrorists, and is then sent against his mother's will to be raised by a black family in California where

he is rejected and beaten by both white and black kids. Spain gets caught up in petty thievery with an L.A. gang, then becomes a tennis champ, only to be charged with murder just after the Watts riots and sentenced to Soledad prison for life. All of this occurs before he turns 20.

In prison, Spain becomes politicized by a charismatic hero of the Black Panther party, and, after the infamous Soledad prison riots, gets shipped to San Quentin where, struggling to save his life during an orgiastic riot and prison takeover, he is charged with conspiring to escape and, as a member of "The San Quentin Six," becomes the center of what was then the longest criminal trial in U.S. history. Chained for years like an animal, Spain suffers degradation almost beyond comprehension. When his lawyers finally secure his release from prison, he effects a rapprochement with the mother he believed abandoned him, with the shadowy figure who fathered him and, most impressively, with his own internal demons. *Chains* is an unflinching, yet incredibly uplifting script.

Phelan is too good a dramatist to portray Spain as some misunderstood ghetto saint. Her Johnny Spain is a flawed, contradictory, immensely human figure. The role is an actor's dream, calling for a performance that plays from Spain's teens through his forties. Hollywood teems at the moment with talented young African-American actors who could launch a career off this project. Omar Epps, maybe?

6. *Black and White* by Mark Allen Smith

Set against a morally murky Southern California that would do Raymond Chandler, James Ellroy or Walter Mosely proud, *Black and White* is a darkly funny, deeply felt story about what happens when a glib, movie-mad academic (think Ralph Fiennes) sets out to write the biography of a macho movie legend who starred in a famous film noir (on the order of, say, Robert Mitchum, who starred in several). Set up like a detective story, Mark Allen Smith's tale tracks the main character as he questions friends, colleagues and lovers of the long-dead movie legend. The tour-de-force quality of the script lies in the way the writer discovers more truths about his own troubled psyche than he does about the person whose biography he's researching.

Although Smith, who has written scripts for such other as-yet unproduced movies as *Griffin and Sabine* and *The Witching Hour*, lives well outside Los Angeles, he's got the landscape and dramatis personae down cold. "Nowadays, you get it all, don't you?" an old-time movie producer snaps at the hero. "Right down to the pubes. And it sells tickets. I had a few bombs I could've saved with some tits and ass and some real piston-action... *Think* about it. *Jane Russell* naked...? *Lana Turner* rolling in the sack? Jesus—*Lana Turner's tits*!"

Black and White is more than talk, however. Screenwriter Smith evokes movie moods as disparate as *Chinatown*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Dead Again* and *The Player*. As our hero uncovers a conspiracy way over his head, Smith unfurls such cool, resonant scenes as a steamy bout of beach sex with the granddaughter of a Hollywood legend, who, slipping off her clothes, tells the film-obsessed hero, "How about a movie? How about *From Here to Eternity*...? Do you wanna be Deborah Kerr or Burt Lancaster?" Throughout, the film makes acid observations on the power of movies to enlighten, to beguile and to delude.

7. *Far As the Eye Can See* by John Hill

The Great Plains, 1867. An ornery, philosophical old buffalo hunter faces certain death at the hands of a Native American chief unless he finds Tawakka, the legendary white bison. His sidekick, a well-educated African-American freed slave, faces a similar fate. With them is a silent, stand-up Cheyenne woman cast away by her tribe after she's been raped by a pack of lowlifes. In their journey, the trio encounters buffalo stampedes, blizzards, wolf packs and marauding Sioux warriors.

Though these are not necessarily the most promising, let alone freshest, elements for a big-scale Western adventure, screenwriter John Hill skillfully sidesteps or subverts clichés, telling his story in elegiac, melancholy tones. With its decidedly downbeat, poetic conclusion, this script is far more reminiscent of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* or *Jeremiah Johnson* than say, the cranked-up *Young Guns* or *Posse*.

Hill, whose *Quigley Down Under* script made for great reading but a terrible movie, rides the Western landscape like an old hand. He plays up his story's *Moby Dick* allusions without making them tedious, and his action sequences invariably present his characters with crucial moral dilemmas.

Best of all, Hill's characters surprise. Aged-in-wood Zachariah Bone, a natural-born role for Clint Eastwood or Harrison Ford, is a rounder and curmudgeon, who, when nature and destiny encroach relentlessly, shows himself to be selfless and generous of spirit. The nameless Native American woman, who communicates only through signs and gestures, at first seems to be little more than the standard beautiful mystery woman who tags along with the men. But when Sioux raiders attack her allies, threatening to steal their guns and horses, she skillfully slits their throats. The Western is a dead genre only so long as moviemakers choose to make *Wyatt Earp* and *Bad Girls* instead of *Far As the Eye Can See*.

8. *Everyone's in Love* by W.D. Richter

The breezy, sophisticated, fast-talking screwball comedies of the '30s and '40s, with their madcap, gorgeous heroines, impeccably groomed, harried heroes and love screwups, made for some of the most exhilarating movies ever produced in Hollywood. Remember Carole Lombard and William Powell in *My Man Godfrey*, Barbara Stanwyck and Henry Fonda in *The Lady Eve* or Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant in *Bringing Up*

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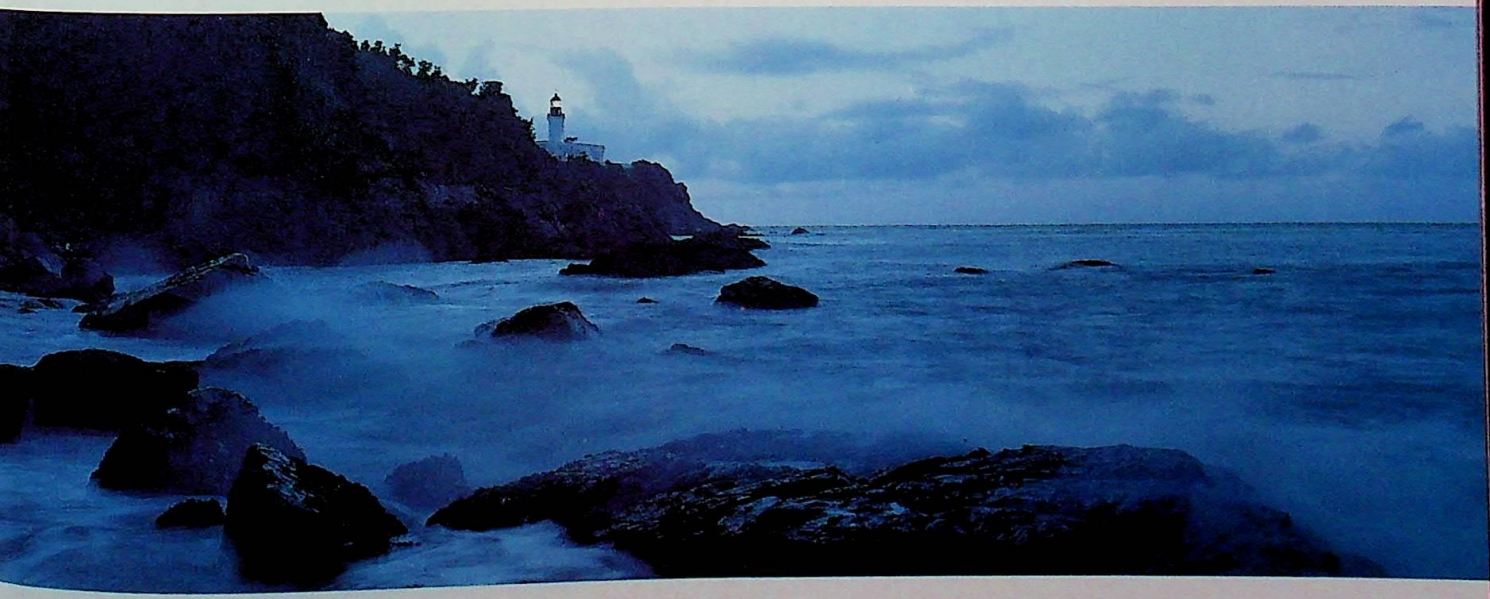

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Pusses Galore

We asked four writers to explain *why* we all find these faces so astoundingly beautiful.

Gene Tierney

Among faces, Gene Tierney's is a tournament rose, an opaline study in serene, sexualized perfection, a mad, musky Egyptian daydream of cat thoughts. It's a face that, yes, could make you half-believe in the human ideal, make you pass into a foggy romantic movie-trance of studio key lights and shadows with edges so soft you could lay your head down in them and sleep for a week. All you want as you're looking at her, all you think you'll *ever* want, is to get close enough to smell the lilac vapors rising from her shoulder.

Tierney's beauty lies somewhere between homespun Everygirl and Oriental exotic, shy high school sweetheart and man-eater. Her eyes smile before her lips do. But if the lips we see here parted in a smile, you'd be witness to the sweetest overbite in Hollywood history. This is a face built to be gazed upon. Perhaps that's why *Laura* was Tierney's breakout film. Deadpan cop Dana Andrews spends the whole first half of the movie falling in love with her portrait. When she shows up in the flesh, Andrews is shaken to his core—we are, too. *Laura* is hardly just a murder mystery; it's a meditation on the brute force of a beautiful face.

Why *do* the porcelain depths of her cheekbones make your knees weak? Why does the gentle teardrop shape of her eyes (note: no eye shadow) dizzy us? For a time, in the late '40s, armies of hormones all over the world were pining for Tierney like saplings reaching for sunlight. She seemed to know it, too—look at those eyes—and not to give a damn.

The quality of Tierney's loveliness remains both timeless and utterly unique—there's no one today who looks even remotely like her. Simply the shape of her face, like a narcissus bulb waiting to sprout, sets her apart. But more than that, there's a clarity to her face, a decidedly unembarrassed matter-of-factness: *I'm probably the most beautiful woman you've ever seen—face it, from here it's all downhill.*

The cruel sugar of Tierney as seen here is several years away from the woman who went mad and was hospitalized. It's hard to believe, looking into these eyes. But it's hard to believe that even the most mundane of human circumstances affected her. Imagine her sitting on the toilet. You can't. Like the image-smitten Dana Andrews, we're lost in the dream.

Michael Atkinson

Ingrid Bergman

Ingrid Bergman in 1941, the year this writer was born. What is she looking at? What is she thinking, or dreaming about? She is not looking at us—this is a special tact or generosity, for it allows us to look at her. But that smile of hers, that slight, fond flex in the triangle of the eyes and the dark, bowed mouth, that smile knows something. Is she somehow looking off at the first in a series of mirrors that shows her *us*, staring like kids at her window? Is she so fond because she has turned us into children?

She feels turned away, with the eyes angling off and her left shoulder raised in question. But the genius of the picture keeps her looking directly at us, the face tipped over, so we don't quite get the bowl-like regularity of her lower features—a strong, sturdy bowl, something you could put flowers in. There is a steadiness in that shape which lends mystery to her oblique looking away, the way in which the adventure of looking—the delicate, eloquent glance—has given amorousness to what is actually a very reliable face. One reason the public in 1941, and for several years thereafter, loved Ingrid Bergman was that they saw her as a decent, honest woman. Not an actress.

But in the movies, "good-looking"—or, looking as if you are good—must always have wickedness within reach. That's how Bergman found her greatest role—the scarlet woman, the adulteress, who left Hollywood, husband, child and stability for Italy and Roberto Rossellini.

Bergman was never armored by, or cut off in, glamour. Her reputation was to be "natural"; it was even claimed that she rejected makeup—though it is her friend here, in this picture, offering a lustrous surface. Cosmetics have lined the eyes and taken her eyebrows in

all photos courtesy of kobal collection

Gary Cooper

He was a dandy who could bust your jaw with one punch. The first urban cowboy. A common-man aristocrat. Born on the range, he spent his adult summers at The Beach Club in Southampton. This photograph, a closeup, suits him. Full shots of his tall, angular, powerful, lean frame (which appealed equally to men and women) only serve to make you want to cut in tight: Give me a closer look.

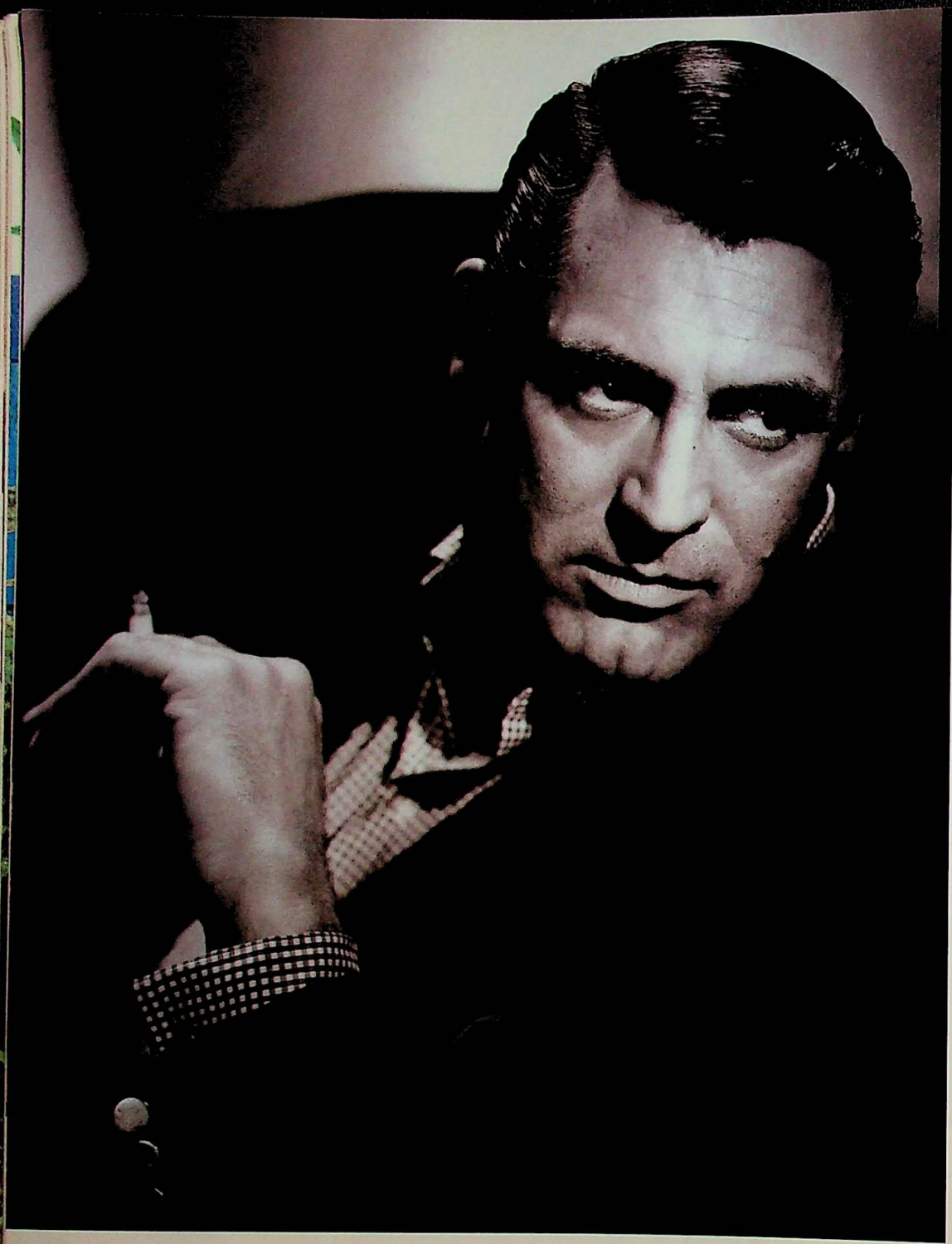
The eyes say *let's get going* to women, *watch out* to men. Either way, they're beautiful and cold, with lashes long enough to be false and eyebrows thick enough to give definition, but not so bushy as to tempt the artist to tweeze out a single hair. Even in black-and-white, the eyes feel gray and green and the skin seems olive—all illusion, the way Cooper was an illusion. He always seemed to be the guy next door, when in truth he was beyond everybody's reach, except at the end, when death scared him and he gave in to his steadfast wife's lifelong dream to turn him Catholic for his last rites.

Rough and immaculate. Hard-edged, manicured, with a hint of softness around the strong jaw, the indulgence of the flesh cushioning the denial of the bone. A big head, a casually large ear and a substantive, well-shaped straight nose send a subliminal message about the hands and the feet and the penis. White tie, silk scarf, top hat: *Don't you just wish you could undress me*, he says to women. *Just try it*, he says to men.

Strong mouth, lips perfectly full—neither too generous nor too spare. What about the teeth? You want him to smile, say cheese, so you can examine him like one of the horses he rode with such effortless control. Would the teeth be cigarette-stain yellow? Jagged or haphazardly arranged? Or what you imagine and want—perfect, even, white? Sorry, men and women. He doesn't open to you. You open to him. ***James Toback***

bold expeditions; but they do not conceal her rather ordinary nose or the width of her face. It is in the mouth that makeup has found the dream of orgy. Bergman's mouth was her wound of longing, so much more experienced than her kind eyes. It often hung a little open, a touch out of breath as if speaking was, for her, more than usually physical.

The eroticism of Ingrid Bergman was never far from suffering. She was not haughty or supreme like a femme fatale. You could believe that she would plunge into passion; the mouth would overwhelm the set Germanic face. But she knew she would pay for it. The fantasy of fucking Bergman—and that is what these stills and their movies wondered about—is to carry her beyond respectability, to break the bowl. ***David Thomson***



Cary Grant

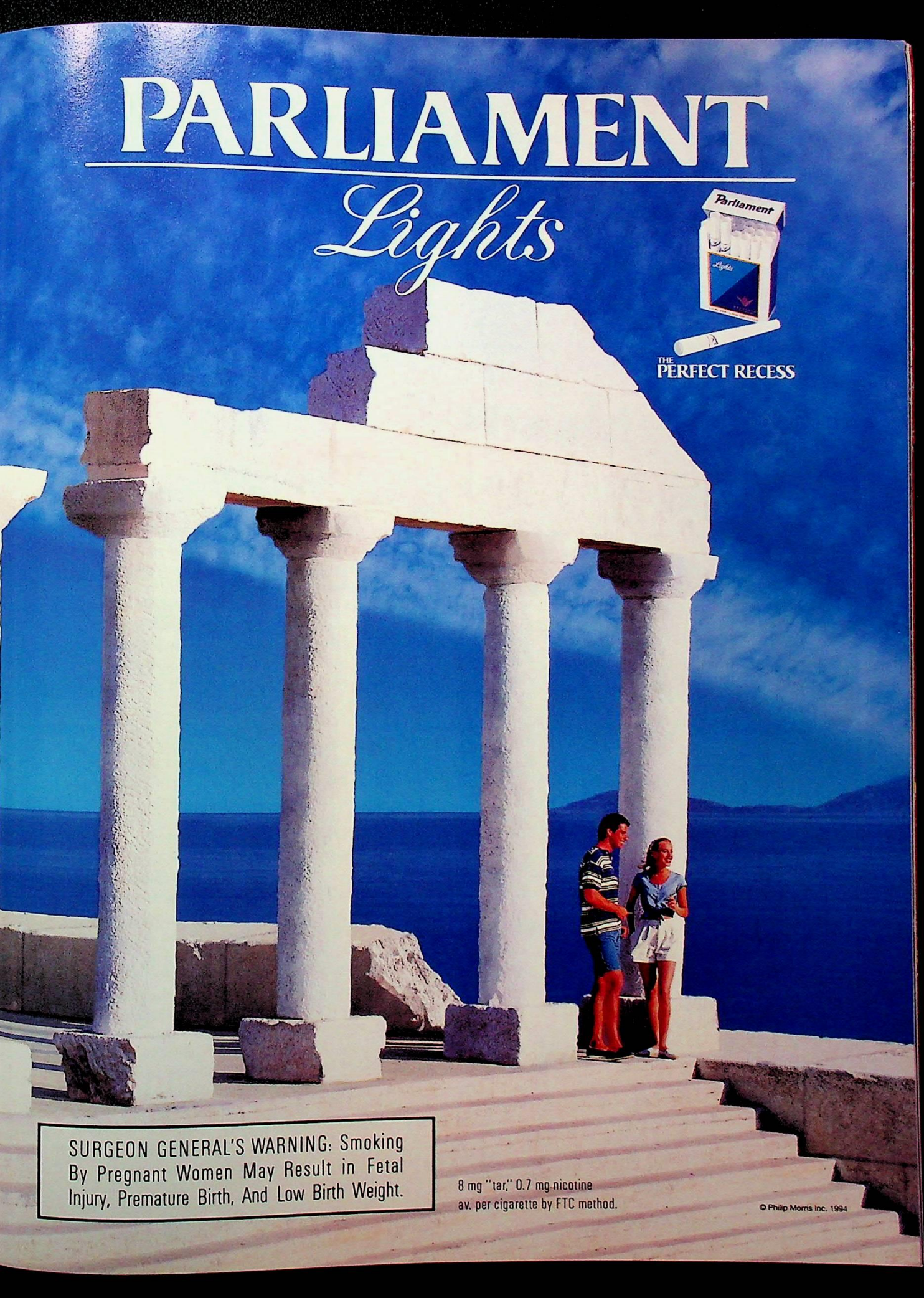
The photograph gives us the airbrushed and beautiful Cary Grant—perfectly groomed and posed just so, slicked-down hair, a sexy and ever-so-slightly sinister look in the dark eyes. But the dimple, big enough to put your thumb in, the only crack in the fashion-plate veneer, hints at another Cary Grant, the Cockney clown and acrobat, the tumbler, the goof-off, the upstart.

With all stars we sense a tension between who they were and who they've become; between our idea of them and theirs of themselves. In Grant, it's the tension between the striving arriviste and the debonair playboy, between the powerfully built and carefully maintained body of the hunk-athlete (seen only occasionally), and the relaxed mirth of the drawing-room sophisticate. But the Cary Grant who glides with such unflappable grace through the Hitchcock films is a mask beneath which an altogether more dangerous and unknowable creature lurks. The conflict between the shabby past and the glossy present creates an unsettling and shifting persona, so that he can play villain or hero, comic or straight man. Or—unwillingly and sublimely, if unconventionally—the lover.

That Grant never saw himself as a lover is, of course, precisely why we love him. His appeal is that he *wasn't* the sort of man who sat around being photographed. But looking at him here in all his studio-fashioned splendor, who can help but sigh. *Come here*, we want to say, even as we expect him to break into a goofy grin or quizzical expression, and say, "Who me?"

And yet by now—at the time of the photograph—all this is behind him as he glowers with a profoundly mature and almost world-weary expression. He has seen and experienced it all, the good, the indifferent, and his eyes have become even warier as they contemplate the psychic demons that confront him at every encounter. He is more than ever an enigma, a man trapped by his own glamour and fame.

Molly Haskell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andy garcia's the reason to rent *when a man loves a woman*

In these days of $8 theater admissions, economic pressures have quite naturally divided movies into two groups: the Must See Now with Dolby and a Lapful of Sno-Caps, and the Rent Later on a Tuesday Night with a Tub of Swiss Almond Fudge. *When a Man Loves a Woman* is best consumed in your living room. Although it fared well at the box office (it brought in close to $50 million), most people were turned off by the serious and depressing subject matter: alcoholism. It looked like a dog with fleas, and it could have been; with Whoopi Goldberg and Danny DeVito starring, you'd be better off playing solitaire Battleship. But with Andy Garcia and Meg Ryan, you've got a renter.

The vast armies of Ryan fans will have a field day watching their favorite frisky, starry-eyed blonde battle the bottle and save her marriage to the best-looking man on earth. Let's face it, some actors and actresses need to do little more than just *be* to make our filthy groin demons sit up and say, "Yeah!" Me, I rent Joan Severance movies. But according to every woman I know, Garcia (here in a pilot's uniform) is all they need for a quiet evening at home with a big pillow pressed to their laps. Not that I'm much of a judge, but just look at the guy—he's a god, and he's never looked so good. He's photographed like Garbo, for chrissake. All limpid Latin eyes and a sly, you-know-what-I-could-do-to-you-given-half-the-chance grin, Garcia's natural charm effortlessly sustains what may have been an overearnest foray into TV-movie territory. The most shallow of Andy-loving renters can be thankful Ryan has the quart-a-day habit and not Garcia—his beauty is never corrupted by anything more serious than a furrowed brow. (Then again, neither is Ryan's. How *can* anyone who packs away that much hooch still look like that? Where are the swollen eyes, the booze fat, the nose swarming with gin blossoms?)

I get a sense that in the Great Out There, any woman looking forward to sharing a bed with Garcia each night would want to stay perfectly clear-headed. Still, and seriously, *When a Man Loves a Woman* is a quiet, strangely romantic film about the effects of alcoholism on a marriage and family, painful terrain few films have dared to explore. (It doesn't concentrate on the alcoholic; *The Lost Weekend* said all that needs to be said on that subject 50 years ago.) When we're introduced to Garcia and Ryan, they're a fun-loving couple who like to do nutty things like have egg fights in the street. As Ryan's secret boozing spirals out of control, resulting in a smattering of child abuse, we glimpse her family's codependent dynamic just as it falls apart. Control-freak Dad is faced with a problem he can't fix, and Mom decides she needs to be rehabbed and enters the subculture of AA.

Although Garcia is the main attraction here, the rest of the movie's cast does okay, too. Ryan is thorny and righteous, believably pissed off that her cocktail lifeline has been pinched; the script (by Ronald Bass and Al Franken) is pungent enough to make us wonder which one of the co-scripters' mates is actually a reformed lush; director Luis Mandoki lets the psychological carnage happen at a cool distance. Best of all is pint-size Tina Majorino, who went on to star in two other recent renters, *Corrina, Corrina* and *Andre*. As the elder daughter, she seethes with the confused, introverted bitterness of a real kid with a lousy Mom, and it may be the supporting performance of the year.

But the movie *is* a romance, one in which the lovers are separated not by some melodramatic plot device, but by the real yet intangible problems of substance abuse. Once Garcia begins to understand Ryan's perspective, he becomes the Galahad we all knew he was; and if Garcia is willing to put up with Ryan's hidden vodka bottles and hangovers at breakfast, Garcia is worth going cold turkey for. *When a Man Loves a Woman* could easily have been your average TV movie of the week (starring Kevin Dobson and Meredith Baxter). But that's what makes this film an ideal renter; you're seeing it in the medium it was meant for, only with big-screen actors, big-screen production value and big-screen payoff.

Michael Atkinson

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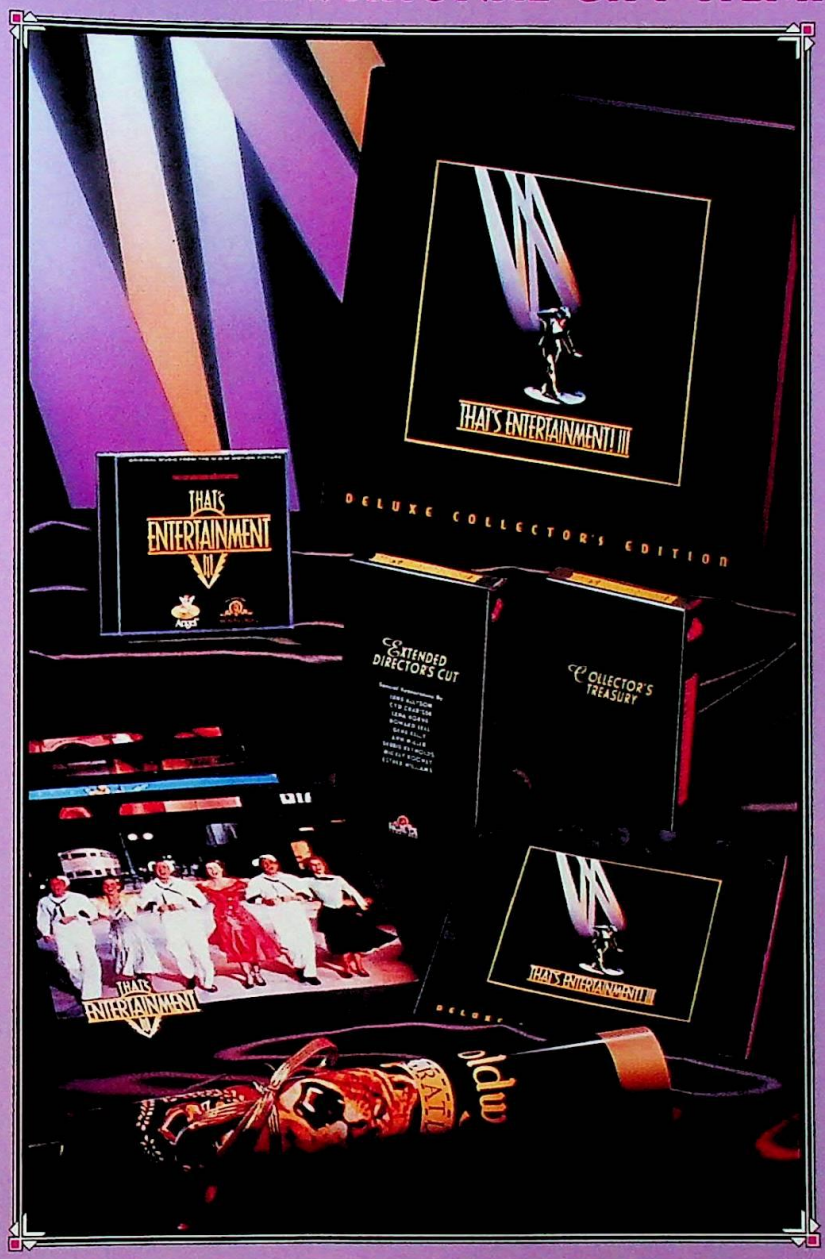

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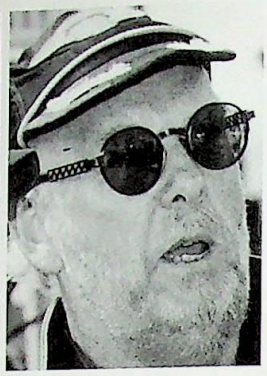
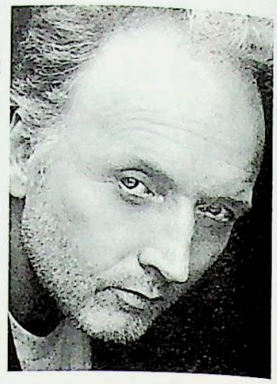

what's your favorite scene in your favorite video?

PAULY SHORE (actor, *Encino Man*, *In the Army Now*): "Everything in *Papillon* is completely cool. I love the grittiness and how Dustin Hoffman's teeth are all rotten, and how his glasses are all corroded. The intricacy of the movie is really cool, like how they were famished and had been in jail so long. I also like the scene from *Throw Momma From the Train*, when Danny DeVito hits Billy Crystal over the head with a pan."

LEIGH TAYLOR-YOUNG (actress, "Picket Fences"): "There's a very emotional scene from *Heaven and Earth* where Tommy Lee Jones's character and his wife finally break down hate into love and forgiveness. And I was moved by almost every scene in *In the Name of the Father*, because of its superior humanity."

MICK JACKSON (director, *The Bodyguard*, *Clean Slate*): "I don't really have favorite scenes, but I do love many scenes from *Bringing Up Baby*. The backchat that goes on between Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn is marvelous and I tried to get that going between Dana Carvey and Valeria Golino in *Clean Slate*."

TOBIN BELL (actor, *The Firm*, *The Quick and the Dead*): "The scene in *Five Corners* when John Turturro is reunited with his mother after getting out of prison. It's unexpected and filled with a sort of heroism. Turturro cries out like a child, begging his mother to face the truth about who he is. It's tremendously surprising."

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the bottom shelf

oh baby!

I've reviewed a few corkers over the years for this column, but the tapes I found this month, from Matinee Classics, really cap the globe. Even those robots from "Mystery Science Theater 3000" would sit mouth agape in front of these 1938 films, *Mystery of Motherhood* and *Painless Childbirth Under Hypnosis*, which, believe it or not, are *still* being displayed on the bottom shelf of my local video store. ■ Motherhood has always been a mystery to me—that's if you don't count attending to my two cats—and now that I've seen *Mystery of Motherhood*, it's even more of a mystery. The cheesy little Life Drama is narrated by Dr. M. Greenwald, who resembles nothing so much as a well-fed zombie. His lecture is pretty dull stuff, but don't despair, it gets gory fairly soon. First we get those embryo drawings we all saw in Health Class, which Dr. Greenwald goes over in hushed and meaningful tones. As the doc flips through the cards, we see baby grow inside mommy and then the birth. And what a birth it is, too. ■ Suddenly the cheesy drawings are gone and we're faced with watching a breech delivery—the sight is enough to send Rizzo back to saddle shoes. The scene presents a lot of mysteries of motherhood: How did she get into that position? Why do women go through this, anyway? You should see Dr. M. yankin' away at that kid like it was cotton in a Tylenol bottle. ■ Later we get more scary images like reenactments with skeletal stand-ins and a real-life Cesarean. The director of *Mysteries of Motherhood* isn't credited but I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it were George Romero. Warning: don't bring snacks to this viewing. When the C-section segment popped up, I was eating a Fla-Vor-Ice, and I squeezed it so hard that it shot up to the ceiling, frightening the cats to no end. ■ Before I could recover, up came the next film, *Painless Childbirth*. As if we hadn't already well gotten over our babyfever! Painless childbirth spells only one thing to me: H-E-A-V-Y D-R-U-G-S. But we're told that the Miracle of Hypnosis is the plan. We get a glimpse of a Mrs.

Edna Kemner, who *doesn't even change her facial expression while going into labor*. That's because hubby's put her under hypnosis. To make sure she's under, "the patient pricks herself with a needle" (and let's have no wisecracks about needling herself with a prick!). Doc steps in to tell us that hundreds of women have used hypnosis when delivering. After looking at Mr. Kemner, I suspect the Mrs. *conceived* her baby while under hypnosis, too. ■ Then it's down to business. The director goes montage crazy as we witness birth after birth while cocktail music pipes in the background. Of course, there's no dialogue, so you can't hear the women screaming, "For God's sake, bring on the drugs!" ■ I cannot imagine why these films were made: they're too amateurish to be medical films and too gross to be stag films. But since they were made in 1938, my best guess is that they were shown to little Susie who asked mommy about the birds and the bees one too many times. As for me, I've now found a worse fate than being Spinster Lady.

Eve Golden

bottom: archive photos

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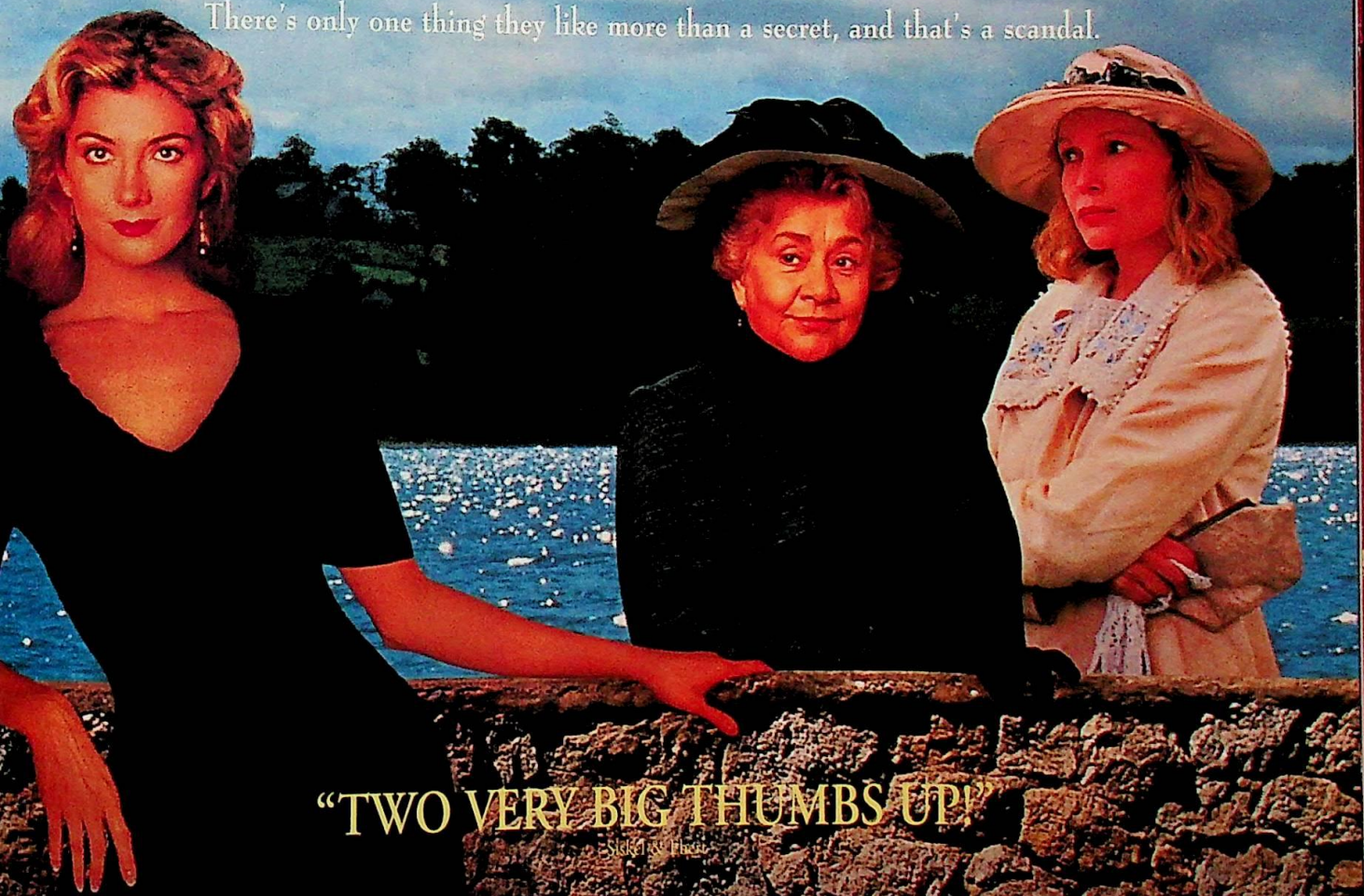

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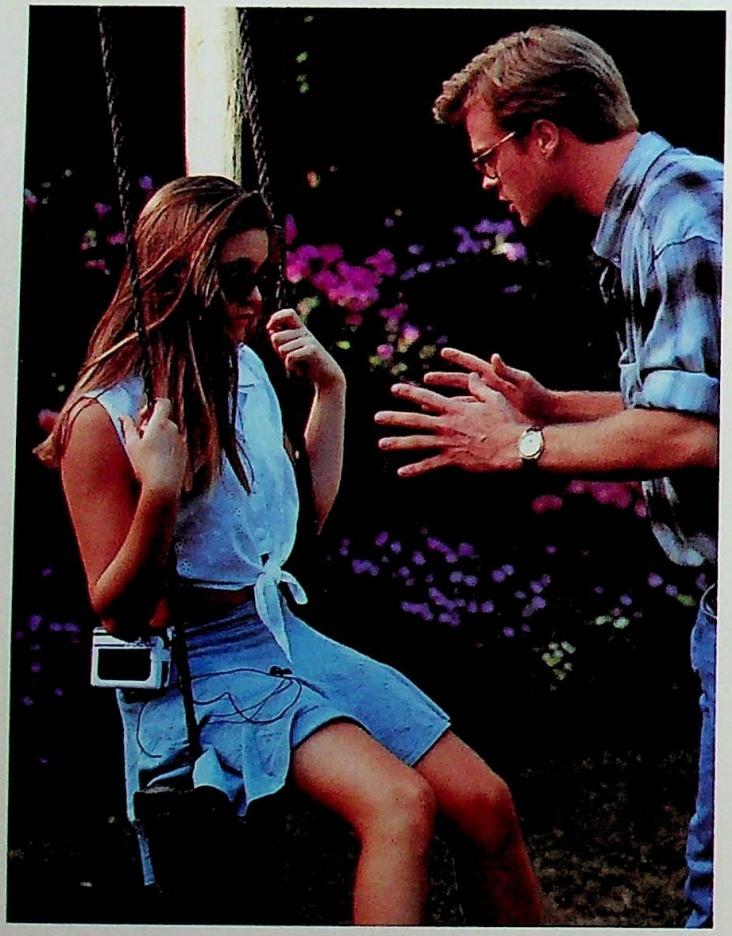
fans of blissfully bad acting will develop a crush on the cast of *the crush*

Don't tell us they don't make Bad Movies like they used to. *The Crush*, a 1993 giggle-fest about a teen psycho-nymphet who makes life a living hell for the twice-her-age writer who's renting out her parents' guest house, is a Bad Movie gem. Alicia Silverstone plays this Lolita-ish minx—think *Poison Ivy* in a Wonderbra—who one second is displaying herself nude to renter Cary Elwes and the next is trying to murder his photographer girlfriend, Jennifer Rubin, by shoving swarms of buzzing wasps into a darkroom's ventilation system. We'd guess that Silverstone, who rapidly exhausts her repertoire of three expressions (coy, steamy, wacko), honed her acting licks studying the *oeuvre* of Cybill Shepherd. When she chirps lines at Rubin like, "Don't worry, Amy, some guys really *like* girls with small breasts," we can only hope for Silverstone's sake that some guys like girls with teensy talent. And we'd guess that Elwes, who rapidly exhausts his repertoire of *one* expression (self-enchanted), honed his acting licks by studying the *oeuvre* of Ryan O'Neal. Just like O'Neal in *What's Up, Doc?*—but that movie was *intended* as a comedy—Elwes hopes to pass himself off as an intellectual by donning specs. Indeed, when Silverstone finds him chomping on a cigar while writing, he explains, preposterously, "Helps me *think*." ■ But it's in its crackpot plotting and kamikaze ripoffs of other moviemakers that *The Crush* attains Bad Movie nirvana. When Elwes can't hack a *Pique* magazine assignment about a Michael Milkenesque arbitrager, *14-year-old* Silverstone secretly rewrites his story so brilliantly that it becomes a career-maker for him. Later, explaining her actions, Silverstone—who sounds to us like she's learned every word of her dialogue phonetically—says, "Your split infinitives put such stress on the adverbs." ■ For plot reasons, Elwes's character just up and becomes stupid, which the actor *does* manage to convey. Long after Silverstone has etched "cock-sucker" onto the hood of his car, made a room into a candle-lit shrine to him and phoned him to say, "Guess what? Got my period. Definitely not pregnant," you'll be screaming aloud, "Ever think of *moving*, Cary?" Of course, if he did, we wouldn't get to savor such prize moments as Silverstone cooing, "Ever do a virgin?" Or the scene in which the heroine's rich daddy, wielding a pair of pliers, tells Elwes what he plans to do to the horny guys his little girl will soon attract: "Some friggin' kid'll be standin' there with his hard-on stickin' out of his pants," he says. "Hope I don't go breakin' it off!" By the time Silverstone gets around to the most implausible plot twist of all—she accuses Elwes of raping her and people actually *believe* her—you'll be breaking in half with hilarity. ■ With two stars incapable of having a crush on anyone but their mirrors, we're afraid that writer-director Alan Shapiro's crush on Alfred Hitchcock is the only crush on display: Silverstone freaks out in full riding gear, like Tippi Hedren in *Marnie*; when Rubin fights off those wasps, it's shot like the finale of *The Birds*; then, falling, she grabs a curtain, like Janet Leigh in the *Psycho* shower. In the absurd climax, Elwes fights for his life on a twirling carousel straight out of *Strangers on a Train*, only *this* one's in an attic (don't ask). ■ Our favorite moment, though, is an original. Elwes, disturbed from his sleep by chopping noises and angry screams, investigates to find a sweaty, crazily wide-eyed Silverstone hacking away at lemons. He asks what she's doing and she hisses, "Making lemonade. Want some?" When *you're* ready for a long cool drink of laughter, go rent *The Crush*.

Robert Damon



I've Got a *Crush* on You: Alas, though it appears Cary Elwes is about to strangle Alicia Silverstone in *The Crush*, no such luck.

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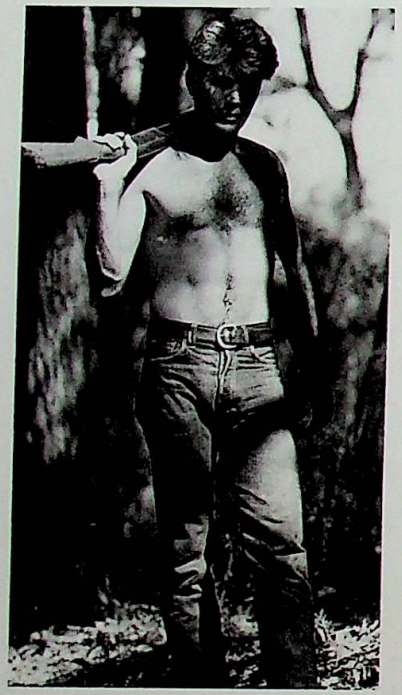
martin sheen in *badlands*



When we first meet Martin Sheen's Kit Carruthers, he's offering his fellow garbageman a dollar to eat a dead dog. This is the kind of absurd dare a nasty 10-year-old might make to his playmate, but Kit is 25, and a real charmer. Kit is also a psychopath, about to embark on a legend-making killing spree from South Dakota to Montana. *Badlands*, the 1973 debut film from then-29-year-old writer-director-producer Terrence Malick, is a haunting story of young, dangerous lovers on the run. Never more than a highly respected "cult" film in the public's eyes, it's had an enormous influence on other filmmakers, from David Lynch to Quentin Tarantino. In Oliver Stone's version (perversion?) of Tarantino's *Badlands*-homage screenplay *Natural Born Killers*, Woody Harrelson's characterization of the Kit-inspired road killer Mickey offers an opportunity for a new appreciation of Sheen's understated, mesmerizing performance.

We all enjoy the adrenaline rush of an exemplary over-the-top cinematic crazy (Dennis Hopper or Jack Nicholson, when they're managing to avoid self-parody). But masterful scenery chewing wasn't an option for Sheen with *Badlands*. Malick's film is a stark, minimalist tone poem about alienation, apathy and death, and its antiheroes, Kit and his 15-year-old lover Holly (Sissy Spacek), are so desensitized that they respond to the mayhem they unleash with a detachment that's chilling.

Kit fancies himself a romantic movie rebel, setting actor Sheen up for the task of impersonating a bad non-actor impersonating a good actor. Sheen slyly employs the mechanics of Dean's screen persona—the shy, self-conscious hangdog body language—and carefully skews a style that's meant to be winning into a shallow act. Kit seduces the know-nothing Holly, but Sheen sees to it there's none of Dean's bruised soulfulness behind Kit's dead eyes—Sheen's stare is bright and cruel.

Sheen was 32 when he played the 25-year-old Kit—not much of a stretch at first glance, considering Sheen's boyish looks and slight build. But Kit is a true child-man, so it is not a small accomplishment that Sheen nearly perfectly suggests his character's warped innocence and obliviousness—it adds an entire dimension to our reaction towards someone who, on the surface, is just another mad dog to be put down. In one scene, Kit impulsively fires through a door at a young couple he's imprisoned, and then wonders if he hit them. "Well, I'm not going down there and *look*," Sheen squeals with nervous energy, and bolts from the scene like a kid who's thought twice about investigating the spider's nest in the basement.

Sheen's Kit stands with Dickie Attenborough's stunning portrait of the young hoodlum Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*, and even suggests The Misfit, from Flannery O'Connor's masterful Southern Gothic short story *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. Throughout *Badlands*, Malick maintains his own clinical, judgmental distance from Kit and Holly and the horrors they bring down. We're not given a chance to understand Kit, let alone like him, yet Sheen works an abundance of meaning into a very small space, so we at least recognize this doomed, erstwhile child as all too human, and appropriately dangerous.

Joshua Mooney

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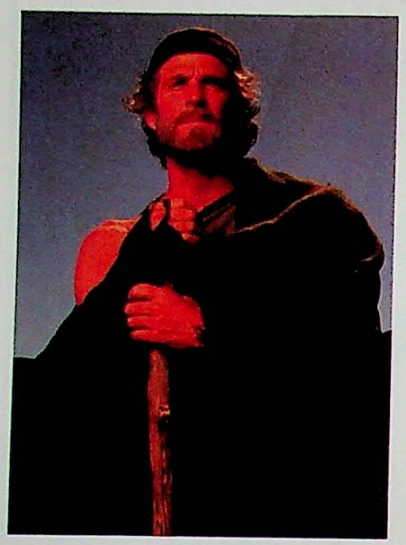

Jacob (1994). If you can get past the fact that *(a)* everybody in this movie has the semi-Brit accent that seems to overtake all actors who do Bible flicks; and *(b)* Matthew Modine's young-Jacob hair makes him look like Ray Sharkey, and his adult-Jacob beard makes him look like Tom Skerritt, this Old Testament melodrama is highly watchable. Modine gives us insight into why Jacob would weasel his brother Esau (Sean Bean) out of an inheritance and work 14 years for the hand of Rachel (Lara Flynn Boyle, astoundingly good here). Dec. 4, TNT.

tune in and/or tape

Thieves' Highway (1949). This kind of pro-labor, pro-union tale of how the working man is exploited by unfeeling management would soon vanish in McCarthy-terrified '50s Hollywood. If this flick is any inkling of his politics, small wonder that director Jules Dassin was busted by the House of Un-American Activities Committee. Gripping and gritty, it's not out on video; tape it. Dec. 4, Cinemax.

Sing, Baby, Sing (1936). Even if, like me, you've never understood the appeal of Alice Faye or The Ritz Brothers, *Baby* has lots going for it, particularly Adolphe Menjou as a John Barrymore-esque Great Actor, and Gregory Ratoff as a Mad Hungarian (a routine he perfected some two decades before playing Max Fabian in *All About Eve*). Creaky, yes, but goofy fun. Dec. 11, Cinemax.

Walk, Don't Run (1966). Cary Grant delivers one final witty and cosmopolitan turn in this remake of *The More the Merrier*, set in Tokyo during the '64 Olympics. The unkind might surmise that the prospect of working opposite co-stars like Samantha Eggar and Jim Hutton forced Grant's retirement, but I suspect it was the realization that he was getting old enough to play parts originally written for Charles Coburn. Though this can't rank with the original, it's got plenty of verve. Dec. 18, Cinemax.

Alonso Duralde

laserium

not new but recommended

THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES (1965). The big-budget, big-screen Hollywood spectacles of the '50s and '60s, made to lure audiences away from their then-teensy TV sets, lack punch on video; the format chops off the scope that was often their raison d'être. On laser one can find such epics in their original ratio thanks to the letterbox format, and these films can be seen to nearly ideal advantage. Certainly that's the case with this period romp celebrating the daffy bravado of the earliest airmen. Genially comic on the ground, it's irresistible when it takes to the skies, with cinematographer Christopher Challis's breathtaking shots of full-scale flying machines racing from England to France. Another plus on this FoxVideo two-disc set is a separate track with chatter from director/co-writer Ken Annakin.

LAND OF THE PHARAOHS (1955). Despite the presence of alluring names in the credits, like co-screenwriter William Faulkner and producer-director Howard Hawks, this is the usual half-baked hodgepodge of pageantry and sex in ancient Egypt. Still, in wide-screen on this Warner Home Video disc, it's worth seeing for Alexander Trauner's oft-imitated production design (think *Indiana Jones*'s dig sites), photographed by two aces, Lee Garmes and Russell Harlan. When the pyramid-building gets a bit ponderous, you'll be happy Joan Collins is on hand as the villain to camp things up. Bonus: the original theatrical trailer, which is a hoot.

THE GREAT RACE (1965). Though dedicated to Laurel and Hardy, this Blake Edwards comedy extravaganza problematically stars two lesser jesters, Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis. Like *Magnificent Men*, it details a big race to Paris, but this one's in period cars and lacks the other film's aerial charms. Even so, Edwards's cartoon-like antics are here played against a giant canvas—the Wild West, European castles, even ice floes—all of which, shot by one of *Pharaohs*' cinematographers, Russell Harlan, looks fetching on this Warner Home Video two-disc set.

The Editors

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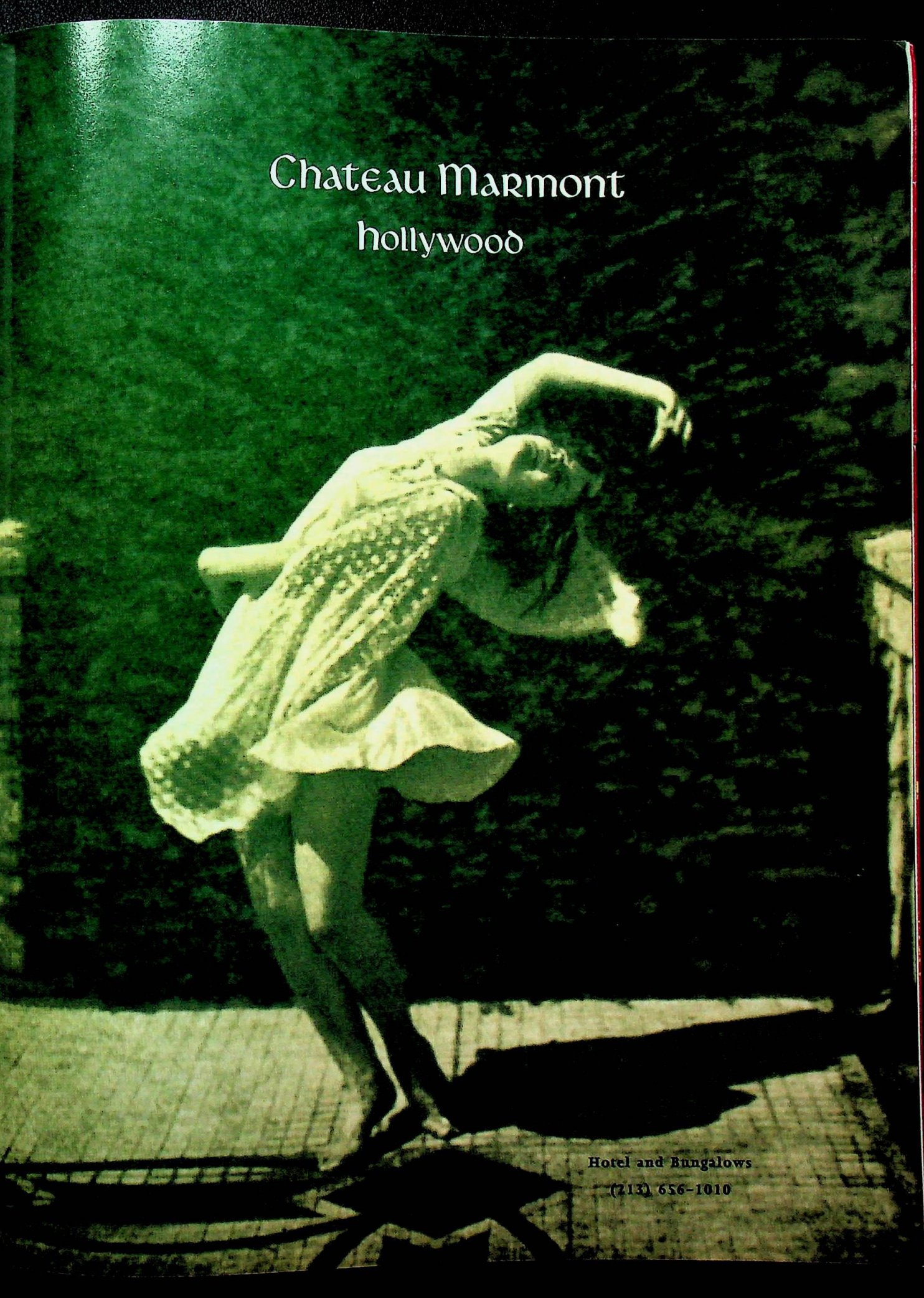
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yourself and your children about that?

Q: Does religion figure into this at all? How were you raised?

A: Episcopalian. But I don't practice any religion right now, and I don't know what we're going to do concerning the children.

Q: Whose idea was it to get married, yours or Warren's?

A: We sort of did it together. It seemed the natural thing to do with us.

Q: Somehow marriage and Warren Beatty never seemed exactly natural. Did his reputation concern you at all?

A: No, no, it didn't.

Q: Were you prepared for the intense media interest in you guys?

A: No. No. How could you ever be prepared for that? In retrospect, it's all sort of hilarious.

Q: How good a father is he?

A: Totally involved. Loves the kids. A very concerned father. Very affectionate.

Q: Does he change diapers?

A: Sure. He doesn't change them a lot, but he changes them.

Q: How long did you nurse?

A: I nursed Kathlyn for a long time, eight months. I won't go as long this time.

Q: Didn't you once appear on "Sesame Street" for your daughter?

A: I did it when she was a baby, a year-and-a-half ago. I did it for her mainly, but she never says, "Mommy, I want to watch it." I had a request—I wanted to work with Grover and with Cookie Monster because when I was a kid and I was babysitting, that's when "Sesame Street" happened. I fell in love with all these characters and especially Grover. So they accommodated me. I got to work with Grover, who is Frank Oz, who also does Cookie Monster. It was really fun, and very fast. I have great respect for that show. I felt honored to be part of it.

Q: When you're working, can you look at yourself objectively?

A: As an actor? No. I'm better than when I first started. I'd never seen myself act and so I found it very jarring when I began doing films, because I realized how much I depended on an illusion in my head about how I looked.

Q: What was the biggest realization you had about film?

A: I was naive. I didn't understand at first that you're there for the director and you have to really give up your performance, literally, to be sane about it.

Q: Would you consider acting better therapy than seeing a psychiatrist?

A: If you use it for that it can be very dangerous. There's no question that you can explore aspects of yourself through roles that you play and you get a chance to investigate yourself, that's healthy and it's therapeutic in a way. But if you're indulging yourself, exploration at the cost of the story or the project, that's not good. I don't like self-indulgence in people's work or in my own. If it's good writing, you have too much responsibility to what the writer's conception is and it's not about you. I wouldn't want to do a lot of therapy because I wouldn't want to uncover all of my demons. Those demons that haven't been dug out of the unconscious are useful.

Q: You definitely sound like someone who's had formal training. Was it at ACT where you played a pregnant Lady Macbeth?

A: That was the idea of the director. Oh God, when I think about that now, I don't know how successful that was. It was probably pretty awful.

Q: Didn't you also teach during your time at ACT?

A: One summer. I loved it. I really, really loved it. It was the summer I got married.

Q: How long were you married to your first husband?

A: Six years. We were together nine years.

Q: How difficult was your divorce?

A: Terrible. It was really painful.

Q: Do you still have contact with him?

A: Yeah. We're very close and I really love him. I'm lucky.

Q: When did you start thinking about the movies?

A: When I was in college. And when I was at ACT I came down here and I felt real awkward. I didn't want to talk to anybody, I didn't know how to go in for these interviews. I would see other girls and they looked so hip, they were all much more comfortable than I was. I was very nervous, so I didn't think I could get into film by doing auditions. I felt I could get in by doing a play. That's why I went to New York.

Q: Did getting a Tony nomination for *Coastal Disturbances* change your life, make you feel like you had made it?

A: Oh, it doesn't feel like that. I was just working really hard, going out on anything I could go out on—TV, film projects.

Q: You landed a TV pilot ["It Had To Be You"] that actually got picked up—only you were dropped?

A: I was devastated. I thought, I'm a terrible actress, I'm not going to work on camera. I really felt hurt.

Q: What did your first film experience, *The Great Outdoors*, teach you?

A: That there was a tremendous amount of money spent. That people behave badly and there's a lot of lack of discipline.

Q: Did you also learn that the film was nothing like the script?

A: Yeah. Because these guys were ad-libbing a lot. Anything they said was always better than what had been written. It was really a kick.

Q: Was *Valmont* also a kick, in spite of the fact that Stephen Frears was making a similar film, *Dangerous Liaisons*, at the same time?

A: I was up for both films and I was glad I got that part. I was in Paris, I was playing this period part—God, it was a total dream come true for me.

Q: *Valmont*'s director, Milos Forman, said that you were so perfect he thought you were fooling him. Many people have talked about your mystery.

A: I always think that's strange. I don't feel like a mysterious person. I feel like I have no mystery and that it's just something people write because otherwise there would be nothing to write about. I think Milos was just trying to be flattering or to say something provocative.

Q: How ironic was it that after you finished with Forman you went to work for Frears on *The Grifters*?

A: I wasn't the first choice for that, I think Geena Davis was offered the part. But Milos showed some of *Valmont* to Stephen, which was incredibly generous of him. He is a true friend, Milos.

Q: Without *The Grifters* do you think your career would be where it is today?

A: Probably not.

Q: Didn't you research that part by reading a book about Ameri-

can women in crime?

A: Actually, yes, I found it on a rack at the drug store. It looked like a really cheesy book [*Good Girls Gone Bad: American Women in Crime*] but they were first-person interviews, so they were very valuable.

Q: Were you at all intimidated working with Anjelica Huston?

A: I don't remember being intimidated by Anjelica. But when I worked with Meryl Streep, oh God, I was so intimidated.

Q: I read that you did the nude scenes in *The Grifters* because you felt they were comedic rather than dramatic.

A: I thought I could do them because of the context it was in. It made sense to me. It was appropriate to the part, it wasn't exploitative. I'd also just been in Europe and they have such a superior attitude about nudity, so much more relaxed about it. So I was feeling very liberated at the time.

Q: Could you do such scenes now that you're married to Warren?

A: It's pretty unlikely.

Q: Would you have to talk it over with him?

A: I discuss everything with him, sure. Ultimately, I would make up my own mind. I'd say, "What do you think?" And he'd say, "Don't do it!" [*Laughs*] No, he wouldn't say that. He would say, "You should do what you want to do." But he would give me his point of view.

Q: Which would be reasons you shouldn't do it. After *The Grifters* you were called the "thinking man's sex symbol." How does that sit with you?

A: Are you kidding? That's really nice.

Q: You were nominated for Best Supporting Actress. Were you disappointed you lost out to Whoopi Goldberg's performance in *Ghost*?

A: I wasn't that disappointed because I felt like such a luck-out. I didn't really expect to win. Of course, at the last moment when they're saying it, you're thinking, Will they say my name?

Q: After the awards, did Whoopi take all the nominees to dinner?

A: Yeah. We got together before the ceremony and we said, "Let's get together next week and whoever wins, pays." I was working on *Bugsy* at the time and I got a big bouquet of flowers in my trailer from Whoopi. She did it all so well. The card said, "Meet at the such-and-such restaurant." Whoopi's great. So Mary McDonnell, who had done *Dances With Wolves*, and Diane Ladd, who was in *Rambling Rose*, and I had dinner with her. She gave us little chocolate Oscars and gardenias. So classy.

Q: Did you eat your chocolate Oscar?

A: God, good question. No, I don't think I did. I saved it.

Q: You played opposite an often-nominated actor, Robert De Niro, in *Guilty by Suspicion*. Was he scary to work with?

A: When I was up for the part I went in to meet with him and I was very nervous. I thought I didn't do a good job. I spent a lot of time trying to break his concentration, which is so impeccable and I have such a lack of it. I kind of goof around a lot when I'm working, as a way of getting my mind off it.

Q: Harrison Ford thought you were easy to work with in *Regarding Henry*. Were you surprised the movie didn't do much business?

A: I suppose I was disappointed, sure. I really liked working with him.

Q: When you worked with Warren and writer James Toback and director Barry Levinson on *Bugsy*, did you feel like the odd lady out?

A: No, I never felt like they were trying to exclude me. I didn't participate as much before the shooting, but once we started I did.

Q: Laura Dern said, "*Bugsy* really annoyed me when Annette Bening got off on Warren Beatty making that guy bark like a dog, there's just no reason for that."

A: Maybe it's a politically incorrect thing for a woman, but I think it's human.

Q: Bette Midler was recently quoted saying, "Women are treated like dog meat, they get the worst roles, the shittiest parts, and it's only going to get worse... the movie business has been hideous to women." Do you agree with her?

A: No.

Q: Do you agree with Glenn Close, who said, "The recent roles for women have been horrendous, they are hookers or mothers or harridan wives"?

A: To a degree she's right. But Glenn is extremely smart about her career. She plays all kinds of different people. But it's true, there aren't a lot of parts and the older you get as an actress, the fewer there are. I don't have anything terribly original to say about that. Yes, it's terrible, and it's a double standard. But I also feel hesitant to complain about it, because I feel: If you believe this, then why don't you think up a story? Men are supposed to write these for us? Why are they responsible?

Q: What does money mean to you?

A: Freedom. When I didn't have a lot of money I wasn't unhappy, so it kind of doesn't scare me in that way. But having money, I feel very fortunate.

Q: Do you have many regrets?

A: Yes and no. I won't say what they are.

Q: What about not playing Catwoman in the second *Batman* because you got pregnant?

A: No, I have this gorgeous two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. I would love to have played that part, but I also really wanted to have a baby.

Q: Was the baby planned?

A: I hate talking about it in that way. It was not an accident, no.

Q: Do you want more?

A: Maybe.

Q: It must be tough being an actress in demand, as you are, wanting to still have kids. One must find the right times.

A: There's never a good time, if you're an actress, and if you're fortunate enough to have parts that are available to you, as I feel I am. But I also have a strong desire to have children.

Q: You've worked twice with Warren in the movies, ever think you might work with him on a political campaign where he might run for office?

A: I don't know if that will happen or not, but if he chose to do it, I would completely back him up. He's got great political sense. He has a very studied and unique perspective. If he ever chose to do it, I would be good at being with him.

Q: Are your political leanings similar to his?

A: Sure. Although I was raised in a much more conservative way than

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"I mean, I can be a jerk like everyone else, but I save that for the people I love."

"Like Bridget?"

"Hey!"

"Why won't you *talk* about her?" I ask. "I'm not asking for anything grisly."

"Okay," he says. "Bridget and I read the interview with Charlie Sheen in *Movieline*, and Bridget said to tell you that she was *repulsed* by it. And I must say that I wasn't exactly amused."

He's referring, of course, to the September issue, in which Sheen told Stephen Rebello, "I'd like to jam Bridget Fonda. She's sexy. Really sexy. I think we would be good together."

"But there are several actors," Stoltz continues, "who would simply lie and say that they'd had an affair with her, rather than that they'd *want* to. So on one level I appreciate his honesty, even while I think he's... not a gentleman."

Later, in a fax from Scotland, Stoltz elaborates. "I think [Sheen] obviously has some need to be perceived as a shocking, in-your-face predator. A lot of actors are like this. I find there are two kinds of actors (or actresses) that you work with constantly: 1) The Respectful Actor. This person is kind and giving and talented and fun to work with and respectful of your relationship. 2) The Predatory Actor. This person is kind and giving and talented and fun to work with but feels that because they are famous they don't have to function within society's rules, i.e., if they are hungry, they eat; if they are attracted to their co-star, they act on it, married or not, no matter what destruction may ensue. These people obviously should be in therapy. The strange thing is that Predatory Actors are often so charming that people forgive them for their heinous behavior. Actors can get away with murder, literally and figuratively, and still be loved. I don't know why this is, but it's odd. Now, most actors would like to be thought of as a Respectful Actor. Obviously Mr. Sheen has a different plan. I think that's too bad. When I knew him 10 years ago, he was a perfectly nice guy."

Back in the park, I say, "But doesn't it make you feel sort of good that people covet your girlfriend?"

"Nothing makes me feel good," he says.

"Not even a massage?"

"No," he says. "At this point, I'm probably... I just don't... I'm not... happy. In my life."

It seems authentic, especially the ellipses.

"And you say this in all sincerity?" I ask him, genuinely concerned.

"I guess so," he says. "He just came right out and said it. I guess he wants to shock people in interviews, which is one way of functioning."

"Wait," I say. "Who are we talking about?"

Stoltz begins laughing. "I just like to lapse into the third person!" he says. "To confuse you! Poor Stephen. 'Suddenly Eric was speaking in the third person! I had no idea who he was referring to.'"

"So how long have you been with Bridget?"

"No. Comment."

"I really just wanted to know about Peter," I say.

"Then why didn't you just ask?" Stoltz says, relieved. "Peter Fonda is... *very* cool. I almost did a film with him a few months ago, a very strange, low-budget vampire film called *Nadja*. Suzy Amis and I were to play brother and sister, and Peter was to play our father. Unfortunately, I had to back out because of family commitments. But I so regret not getting to play Suzy Amis's brother and Peter Fonda's son. I think it could've been so much fun. Although I know Peter Fonda's son and I'm sure he has many stories of how it can *not* be cool at times."

Maybe Stoltz will get to play Peter's son offscreen. For some reason, that thought segued into this one: I'm not a homosexual, but I play one on TV. "You played a homosexual in *Roommates* on television," I remind him. "And now there seems to be a sudden spate of transvestite movies. Would you take a cross-dressing part?"

"Oh, absolutely!" he says immediately. "Although they might as well just hire Suzy Amis to play me playing a cross-dresser. But yes, I'd love to. What an interesting frame of mind that must be. And plus, frankly, I'm wearing kilts over in Scotland."

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, two lovely teenage girls float up on rollerskates. A breeze blows their hair back, revealing Walkman wires. "Shhh," one of them says, handing each of us a flier advertising the best grilled-chicken sandwich on earth, "don't say anything."

"Why?" Stoltz asks her. "Is someone filming you doing this?" But she rolls away without saying anything.

Stoltz laughs and says, "That was the original title of that Cameron Crowe film I did. Actually, it was the name of the intended sequel. *Shhh, Don't Say Anything* should be the title of this interview. In fact, I'm going to start saying that. Ask me a question."

"Do you wear underwear under your kilt?"

"Shhh, don't say anything," he says, putting his finger to his lips. "You'll have to see the film."

"Why? Are there some extraordinary camera angles?"

"Some surprising horse-mounting," he says.

"Do you think of yourself as famous?"

"No, but I think that I'm occasionally recognizable. I like it that way. I'm able to function in [public]. I can go to the grocery store, go to the Laundromat. I can live a life."

That's a life? "Is there a Stoltz machine of people who manage your career?"

"It's a very meager one," he says. "Let me put it this way," he says. "I'm with CAA, who represents Tom Cruise on one level and me on the other. Now, who do you think requires more machinery?"

Mmm, multiple choice. I have a fifty-fifty chance of answering correctly. "You," I say.

"Why would you say that?"

"Because if Tom's up there and you're down here, you'd need more of a push."

"Ah, but you're assuming that I wanna change my position," he says. "Well, I'm very content with where I am. I'm kind of happy with my career. Most of the movies [I have coming out] are small ones that I've produced, that won't necessarily enhance me financially or increase my popularity. They're just films I wanted to do."

Stoltz co-produced *Bodies, Rest & Motion* and *Sleep With Me* "for a reasonable budget," he says. "And *Bodies* actually turned a healthy profit, what with video and foreign rights." And he's poised to co-produce *Bullet's Dream*, a psychological action-thriller. So what's in it for him to produce?

"An opportunity to work with friends, to have creative control over what we wanna film, who we wanna cast, what crew members we wanna hire. If we wanna change a scene and improvise 10 minutes, we can, without having to get permission from studio heads. The inmates are running the asylum. I think that that lack of organization lends independent films a certain spontaneity and energy."

"Do I smell directing?"

"I don't know," he says. "I've been offered a few things, and I've thought about it. But, having produced, I'm really aware of how much

energy and angst goes into directing. I don't think I have the stamina to direct at this point. Although someday I might like to try my hand at it."

"Do you think Bridget Fonda is famous?"

"No comment."

"When you go out together, do people come up to you?"

Stoltz laughs. "'No comment,' he says, laughing and lapsing again into the third person."

"When they do approach you, is it because of you or her or both?"

"A little of both," he says. And that was it for then on Fonda. Later, from Scotland, he pours his heart out: "I have a great deal of love for her, but I'm not interested at this point in dragging her into my press. It's intrusive, and in the past it's been a mistake."

Back in New York, I press on. "Other than scripts," I ask, "do you read?"

"I do read," he says. "I just started a novel called *Girl, Interrupted*, given to me by a girl who is . . . short. And yet very attractive."

"What do you mean by 'and yet'? Julie Christie is short."

"She didn't give me the book though. I loved her in *Don't Look Now*. Although I always confuse that film with *Don't Look Back*, the Dylan film."

"Viewed side by side," I say, "you can really tell the difference. One's in color, the other's in black-and-white, for example. A more difficult task is distinguishing between *Mask* and *The Mask*, which are both in color."

"There's also *The Waterdance* and *Waterland*," he says.

"You know, *The Waterdance* is constantly on cable, but I've yet to see it all the way through," I confess. "But I've seen many parts."

"My sex scene with Helen Hunt?"

"I love Helen Hunt. Can we talk about her for a minute? I know you don't have a TV, but she . . ."

"No, actually I've been trying to get on her TV show," Stoltz says. "I go down occasionally to watch Helen tape her show, because she's a friend and I adore her. I told the producers that I wanted to be on the show. Cut to two years later and I haven't heard from them. I came up with a plot where I would play Helen's old boyfriend who comes to town and is going through a divorce and asks to sleep on their couch and has a *wild* sexual affair with Helen. She's entirely capable of it. There's a side to Helen Hunt that is *extremely* sensual and not [evident] on the show. But that was my idea and I'm still hoping."

"Who else do you love?"

"I love Meg Tilly. And Winona Ryder and Uma Thurman and Jessica Lange. And, of course, Bridget."

"You've probably noticed this," I say, "but it seems that you work repeatedly with the same people."

"Usually they're *guys*," he says, as if the male were a noxious odor. "Enough with the guys. But I've worked with Laura Dern twice, in *Mask* and *Haunted Summer*."

"*Haunted Summer*, the movie you were naked in. And you've been naked ever since. You were naked in *Naked in New York*."

"Hence the title," he says. "Anyway, what is the big deal with nudity? When I see a love scene where the actors are strategically covered, I think, 'There's an actor who's uncomfortable being nude and they shouldn't have taken the role.' It takes me out of the story and I end up thinking about how self-conscious the actor is."

"What about violence?" I ask while he's so forthcoming.

"I think violence, cynicism, brutality and fashion are the staples of our diet. I think in the grand history of story-telling, going back to people sitting around fires, the dark side of human nature has always been very important. Movies are part of that tradition. If you can express the dark side, or evil, in a symbolic way in a film, it's a healthy outlet. I think if you start censoring movies and coming out against violence, all you're gonna have is a bunch of airline movies. Or TV shows."

Or anything on Bravo. "Have you seen *Speed*?"

"Yes I have," he says. "I'm friends with the woman who's in it."

"Do you mean Sandra Bullock, or some minor, cowering bus passenger?"

"Sandy Bullock. She's more than a friend; she is someone I'm forever indebted to. She searched for and found my dog—who had been mistakenly let out—while I was on location for *Little Women*. I'm unsure how I can ever repay her. I was a mess and she really came through for me. Add her to my list of actresses."

"Any dope on your role in *Little Women*?"

"To be honest," he says, "in *Little Women*, I'm really just a token male. I sorta stand around with facial hair to prove that the little women are,

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KATE MANTILINI

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Lend Me Your Ears

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awarded a very prestigious medal by the Catholic Church in recognition of the $100 million he has donated to a fund that will succor the poor, aid starving artists and contribute to the economic revival of Sicily. Mantegna tries to get on Pacino's good side by presenting him with a plaque from the Meucci Foundation, named after an Italian who purportedly invented the telephone before Alexander Graham Bell claimed to have done so. Pacino says he never heard of the guy. The telephone, bear in mind, is a device that involves the use of the human ear. *Symbolism and foreshadowing. Symbolism and foreshadowing.*

The formalities concluded, Mantegna now explains to Pacino that he has been having trouble with a cheap punk who claims to be related to Pacino. The punk in question is one Vincent Mancini (Andy Garcia), the illegitimate son of Sonny Corleone (James Caan), who was killed off in *The Godfather.* Pacino tells Garcia to join him and Mantegna in his study for a confab. Garcia arrives, improperly attired in a leather jacket, glances at Mantegna, and grabs his nuts.

Trouble is a-brewing.

Garcia now tells Pacino that Mantegna has been running around behind his back saying things like "Fuck Michael Corleone." Pacino asks Mantegna if this is true, noting that anyone who would say such a thing is "a dog." Mantegna concurs with the Don's forceful logic, remarking, "Yes, it's true. If anyone who would say such a thing, they would not be a friend. They would be a dog." Pacino ignores Mantegna's deplorable grammar and accepts this explanation, telling his illegitimate nephew to make his peace with his superior. Mantegna and Garcia embrace, but then Mantegna goes one step too far and whispers something in Italian while giving the chastened Garcia an affectionate but condescending chuck on the ear. The next thing you know, Garcia has his teeth firmly planted in Mantegna's external acoustic equipment, seemingly making a ferocious attempt to bite it off.

This scene is important for two reasons. One, it establishes in the minds of the audience that Garcia is a sadistic brute unfit for human company, and thus will almost certainly end up in bed with Bridget Fonda later that same day. More important, the bite on the ear seems to affect Mantegna's ability to act for the rest of the movie. Let us recall that the ear is the center of equilibrium in the human body, and once it has been damaged, however lightly, even a talented actor like Joe Mantegna will find himself muffing his lines. By the time Mantegna, now decked out with an ear patch, makes his farewell speech at the Convention of Tutti Capo in Atlantic City, where he vainly attempts to assassinate Pacino, his acting is so much out of the Rod Steiger On A Bad Day School of Dramatic Art that he can no longer deliver his lines with any trace of credibility, and really must be killed.

At this point, I'd like to clear up a confusing issue about the 1978 film *Midnight Express*. When I first conceived the idea for this story, I told all my friends that I would welcome any tips about movies in which aurally related mishaps occur. No less than *three* friends advised me to rent Alan Parker's sordid tale of savagery in a Turkish prison, assuring me that there was a memorable scene where the house ratfink has his ear ripped off by Brad Davis. In fact, I had already seen this all-purpose slimefest at least three times, and seemed to recall that scene myself.

Dutifully, I rented the film once again and fastforwarded to the relevant scene. Alas, the reigning mythology about the film is untrue. Just as horror-movie buffs always say they can recall the sight of Janet Leigh's red blood vanishing down the bathtub drain in *Psycho*, even though the film is in black-and-white, people insist that Brad Davis physically rips off another character's ear in *Midnight Express*. This is totally untrue. Davis does gouge the ratfink's eyes, smash his face into a set of stone steps and rip his tongue out with his own teeth, climaxing his performance by spewing the tongue into the air, but at no point does Davis attempt to rip off the man's ear.

Understandably, many cinephiles have deluded themselves into thinking that a movie scripted by Oliver Stone would almost certainly contain a scene where a human ear is torn off, but in this case their memories deceive them. The fact that three of my friends inaccurately recalled such a scene lends credence to the theory that Oliver Stone is the victim of a vast conspiracy on the part of the media, the ratings board, and even the general public to make him appear an even more depraved sadist than he actually is. Or at least it did until Stone made *Natural Born Killers*, in which someone *does* get their ear mutilated.

Although *Godfather III* was not a huge commercial hit, it was, at the time of its release, the largest-grossing film in history to feature a scene where a human ear is mistreated. With this repugnant scene in *Godfather III*, ears finally entered the mainstream of cinema and became an acceptable focal point of dramatic tension. The same year that *Godfather III* came out, Robert Altman released *Vincent & Theo*, yet another look at the life of the doomed, uni-eared van Gogh, which, like *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Blue Velvet*, features a scene where one man (van Gogh) surprises another (Gauguin) by kissing him just before an ear gets hacked off. Two years later testing the waters a bit further, Quentin Tarantino made his odious *Reservoir Dogs*, which contains the most graphic auricular violence in the history of motion pictures. Ears were here to stay. Though they were not going to stay put.

The central theme of *Reservoir Dogs* is honor among thieves: that even cold-blooded murderers recognize that there are bounds of good taste beyond which even they dare not venture. Harvey Keitel adumbrates this theme when he draws the crucial distinction between ordinary murderers such as himself and psychopaths such as Michael Madsen.

"A psychopath ain't a professional," fumes Keitel after a botched heist turns into a bloodbath because of Madsen's itchy trigger finger. "You can't work with a psychopath. You don't know what the sick assholes are gonna do next."

These lines, it should be emphasized, are uttered *before* Madsen carves off a hostage cop's ear with a straight razor while dancing to "Stuck in the Middle With You," *before* he asks the cop, "Was that as good for you as it was for me?" *before* he whispers into the severed ear, "Hey, what's going on?" and *before* he douses the cop with kerosene. For the record, I would just like to say that I cannot remember where I was when Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were shot, but I can perfectly recall where I was when I first saw *Reservoir Dogs*. I was at home, sitting in my favorite armchair, poised in front of the television set, wondering what kind of sick fuck makes pictures like *Reservoir Dogs*.

Despite the failure of *Reservoir Dogs* to set the world on fire commercially, other moviemakers are showing no eagerness to soft-pedal the auscultative depravity in theirs. John Woo had one henchman scissor the earlobe of another in the Jean-Claude Van Damme masterpiece *Hard Target* (1993). Gary Busey lost stereo in *The Firm* (1993). The fact that not one, not two, but three motion pictures depicting graphic acoustic trauma

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Natasha Richardson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

beautiful things. I like to take care of my friends and my family and cook them a good meal. I like to make sure people are taken good care of. I love to read and to see movies and to totally zone out by traveling somewhere wonderful. I'm also somebody who's very good at trying to take care of people and at organizing. I like to make sure that everything's right."

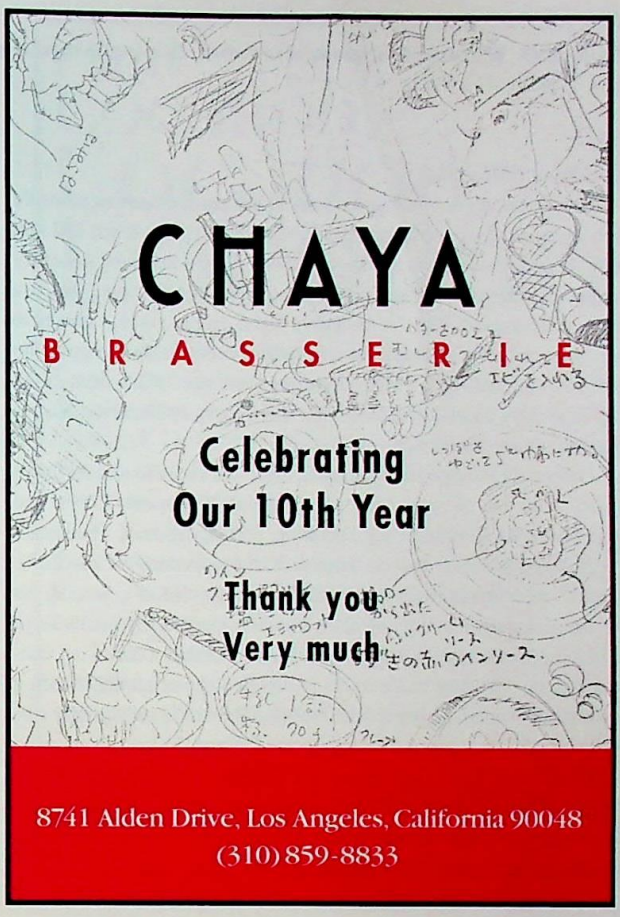
Coming from such a famous family, I wonder whether Richardson was ever awed by someone else's fame. "I write fan letters all the time," she says, laughing. "I was about seven when I wrote my first one, which was a fan letter to the Queen. I used to have a long list of heroes in my little diary, ranging from David Cassidy to Harrison Ford to Illie Nastase. I sometimes write to actors if I really admire their work, because I've been on the receiving end of some of those and it means an enormous amount. I recently wrote to Tommy Lee Jones about his work in my father's last film, *Blue Sky*, because I found it so moving."

Although Richardson has made her mark playing tortured and intense, she strikes me as someone who should try daffy. After all, onstage she has played the old Grace Kelly role in a stage version of *High Society*. Besides, she shares with her mother an almost comical gravity, so where is Richardson's *Morgan!*, the screwball comedy that put Vanessa Redgrave on the map? "I do have a daffy streak," she says. "I remember being offered *The Favor, the Watch and the Very Big Fish* with Bob Hoskins and Jeff Goldblum, but only pending a meeting in Paris with the director practically on the basis of, you know, 'Be funny,' which is the most horrible pressure to be under. I was trying to think of jokes on the plane, like, 'Did you hear the one about . . . ?' It was different when John Irvin offered me *Widows' Peak*, because that was a cool, arch femme fatale, so my points of reference were Claudette Colbert, Grace Kelly and a little bit of Glenn Close's voice. But I would love to do something like Carole Lombard or Katharine Hepburn."

Richardson obviously knows that few people would peg her for a closet madcap. To stir such things up herself, she took a comedy project that she is developing to writer-director Nora Ephron, who, she says, was "almost tempted, but she has so many other projects. You never know, though, it still might happen." Something more certain to happen is that next summer she and Neeson will reunite with their *Anna Christie* director on a movie they are developing based on Emile Zola's tragedy *Therese Raquin*. Few laughs are promised, but, as Richardson puts it, "what an incredibly passionate love story. Who could believe it was written over one hundred years ago?"

Yet, although producers and directors appear to be quite interested in the love story of Natasha and Liam, Richardson has a clear fix that they should not become the Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton of the '90s. "We have to be really careful about the projects we decide to do together," she reasons. "We can't do every movie together, nor do we want to do every movie together. We're both aware of how special it is to work together and that we do seem to have this chemistry that we might not necessarily have just because we're a couple. And a lot of people want to exploit that. We would like to, on and off, be able to do that for a good many years of our lives. So, the stakes are quite high in choosing what we do and don't do. We don't want to blow it."

Stephen Rebello interviewed James Woods for the November Movieline.



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Baby? Intoxicating stuff.

Contemporary moviemakers have scorched themselves so badly when trying to revive or contemporize that old, high-style wit and sass (think *At Long Last Love*, *I'll Do Anything*, *I Love Trouble*, *Switching Channels*, *Undercover Blues*), studio bosses now balk when such a project rolls around. They're probably right, *except* when it comes to *Everyone's in Love*, a speedball romantic comedy from the guy who wrote such oddball stuff as Phil Kaufman's version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and who directed *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eight Dimension*.

Everyone's in Love (as in, maybe, "Blue skies up above, everyone's in love" from the old tune "Up a Lazy River"?) presents Robert and Lizzie Sidebottom, upscale, great-looking, uneasily married Manhattanites who run a booming fashion business founded on designer knockoffs. Robert is an ex-gynecologist who had been suspected of poisoning his first wife; Lizzie is a brainy, lovelorn knockout perpetually on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Valerie, Lizzie's best friend, is a conniving fashion designer pretending to be in love with Robert but actually bedding his daughter, Roberta. Meanwhile, Bob Jr., Robert's randy young son, also has a case for Valerie. Getting all this? Good. Valerie promises to pay $40,000 to Lizzie's ex-husband, Ed Thorpe, a sexy singing cowboy trying to salvage his failing Western-theme restaurant, if, while posing as a live-in gourmet cook, he will seduce Lizzie. Why? So that Valerie can snag Robert and his half of the fashion empire.

In grand screwball style, these sexy scoundrels collide at the Sidebottoms' fabulous "summer cottage" getaway during a near monsoon. The air is thick with sex, betrayal and such Thorpe-created gourmet delicacies as moose ravioli.

Sophisticated comedy demands scalpel-like precision to give ballast to its apparently lighter-than-air mood. It also demands crackling dialogue and appealingly daffy characters. *Everyone's in Love* delivers. When a dimwitted morning TV host asks a stressed-out, rambling Lizzie whether she is trying to promote or trash her clothing line, she blathers that, of course, she is trying to promote it: "It feeds my empire. Keeps my husband and the banks from having a collective heart attack. So I don't mind working around the clock 52 weeks a year, with no passion in my life, a stroke before I'm 45... it's *fun*... even if your average American woman is way too smart to lay out 600 bucks on just *one* of my clown suits here, since finally she realizes that shopping's just a crumby substitute for love." Robert, watching his TV in horror, declares, "The bitch must die."

Just imagine what a feast such skilled comic actors as Denis Leary, Meg Ryan, Susan Sarandon and Judy Davis could make of roles such as these.

9. *Battle of Ono* by David Henry Hwang and Gary Tieche

Is the moviegoing world ready for an Asian-American shoot-'em-up that opens in 1870 amid the class warfare in Canton, China and continues amid the class warfare of Gold Rush-era California? Ready or not, here is a screenplay co-written by Gary Tieche and David Henry Hwang (the latter is best known for *M. Butterfly*) that is as rousing, antic, mysterious and enveloping as a night at the Peking Opera, Western-style. Owned by producers Midge Sanford and Sarah Pillsbury, *Battle of Ono* bows deeply to Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* and to *The Magnificent Seven*, but boasts its own quirky personality, laced with a romantic tug and a stinging outrage toward racial injustice.

The story's prime mover is Lum, a handsome, daring former Taiping rebel who emigrates to America, helps build the nation's emerging railroad system, finds himself swindled out of his earnings, bands together a motley assortment of fellow Asian émigrés (an acrobat, an herbalist, a sailor, an overweight charmer) and strikes gold. His proud refusal to kowtow to racial bigotry puts him at odds with a powerful railroad baron who sends gunmen and goons to scare him off. Scorned and swindled, Lum is forced to defend his land in a struggle that pits Asian-American savvy against American firepower. This sequence and several others—replete with gunplay, martial arts, catapults, falling spears, flying daggers and acrobatics—should lure a skilled action director to create a funky Western that suggests Sam Peckinpah and Sergio Leone, with more than a dash of John Woo. That screenwriters Hwang and Tieche make their case against racial bigotry with such persuasion and lack of pretense gives the piece extra texture and zing.

By Hollywood standards, *Battle of Ono* is a long shot. The scale of the film requires the great, spacious, *expensive* outdoors. Then, too, the lead role requires not a Costner or a Gibson, but a guy with the bloodlines, the moves and charisma of the late Brandon Lee. Still, some battles are worth the bloodshed.

10. *Stained Glass* by Neal Jimenez

Twisted. Unsettling. Hilarious. Despairing. Those are the adjectives that come to mind with the work of Neal Jimenez, screenwriter of *River's Edge* and the writer-director of *The Waterdance*. Jimenez wrote *Stained Glass*, a dark, funny script that reads like the filmic correlative of a Morrissey song. The story centers on three high school friends: Buddy, a studly, volatile Italian basketball star: Craig, his teammate, a sensitive, unassertive guy; and Jennifer, a beautiful cheerleader, whom they both love. Seven years after graduation, we find Buddy divorced from Jennifer, who is raising their son, Danny. Craig and Jennifer then marry, and Buddy, in a psychotic rage during a tense dinner party at their home, kills Jennifer and wounds Craig while Danny looks on.

Years later, Buddy is still tucked away in prison, serving a 10-year sentence. Craig has adopted Danny, now a brooding, angry kid who despises his stepfather, hangs out with a retarded friend, corresponds with a Manson family member, and watches Oliver Stone's *JFK* over and over. Meanwhile, inmate Buddy carries on correspondence with Christian, a young guy who is later revealed to be a child molester and murderer.

Where does all this weirdness lead? When Buddy gets sprung from prison and Christian takes a nearby apartment to watch over him, and Danny buys a gun, you can bet it's headed for a strange unraveling. Murder, seething sexuality, madness—one expects no less from Jimenez. But, there is a great deal more going on in this script. Jimenez is one cool, crazy writer. This script is hip, lyrical, touching and off-the-wall funny. It's strong medicine, a project for which to keep one's fingers crossed.

Stephen Rebello interviewed Stan Winston for the November Movieline.

Annette Bening

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he was. His parents were more liberal than my parents. We really didn't talk about politics much in my house.

Q: How's Warren with your family? Is he a close or distant brother-in-law to your brothers and sister?

A: He's a great brother-in-law. He's interested mainly because of our children—in their having cousins and an extended family. Also, Warren loves medical issues and my sister is a doctor in Orange county.

Q: She's a gynecologist, isn't she?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you dream much?

A: I'm a deep sleeper and I don't tend to remember my dreams. I dreamt about my first agent the other day. Why I was dreaming about him, I don't know. I read Jung's *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* and was just thinking about that when you asked about dreams. His memories and dreams were so vivid.

Q: What else have you been reading?

A: A couple of books about raising children. I read Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, which I'm considering doing. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, which is very good.

Q: Who's your favorite author?

A: Truman Capote.

Q: Do you like to write yourself?

A: I do, but I don't like to talk about it. It's purely for myself. It shows me what I think, that's the value.

Q: How complicated do you think you are?

A: It depends on the day. The more I get to know myself, the more complicated I feel. But I feel like the more I can simplify my life and my own attitude towards myself, the easier it becomes.

Q: Are you stubborn?

A: I'm not aware of how stubborn I am, but I am very impatient. And I can be very emotional. *Very.*

Q: What would be sinful to you?

A: To have a cigarette. I've smoked on and off. I'm not smoking now.

Q: Five years from now, where do you see yourself?

A: Probably disorganized and trying to juggle children, a husband and work. Similar to what I'm doing now.

Q: Not moving into the governor's mansion?

A: I don't know where we'll be living. I kind of like that feeling. Not knowing exactly where we'll be . . . or what I'll be pursuing.

Lawrence Grobel interviewed Alec Baldwin for the May Movieline.

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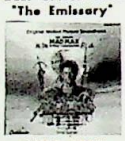

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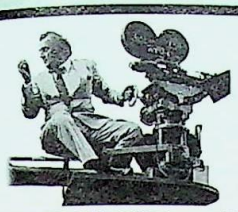

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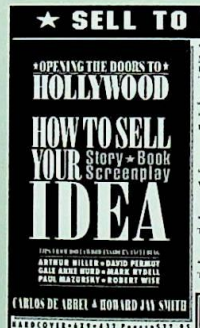
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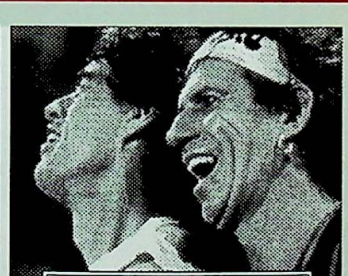

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Movieline CLASSIFIEDS

Eric Stoltz

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 93

in fact, heterosexual. And I had a vivid and active fantasy life involving almost every one of those little women. How could I not? Every one of them smart, kind and beautiful. Every one of them in corsets everyday. Every one of them unattainable. It was heaven just stepping onto the set."

Yes? And?

Stoltz senses I want more. "If you think for a minute that I'm going to go into detail about my fantasy life," he says with a cruel smile, "you are truly out of your mind. I have too much respect for all the actresses involved."

"Will the film have an NC-17 rating for the '90s?"

"I wish," Stoltz says. "I wish it were a bodice-ripper. But no—unless the studio decides to recut it." A moment later, he adds, "*Fluke* will be coming out around the same time as *Little Women* and this interview. It's a film where Matthew Modine dies and is reborn as a puppy and I get involved with his widow, Nancy Travis. We all had to act with dogs of every breed. One day, I'll tell you all about my rich and vivid fantasy life involving almost every one of those dogs. *And* their trainers."

"It's amazing, the talent you've worked with. And *are* working with."

"I've been kicking around for a long time," he says. "Almost as long as you have."

"Is there a director you'd like to work with?"

"I'd like to work with Alan Smithee."

"Who?"

"He is one of the *most* underrated and yet prolific directors in the DGA. He's directed more films than anyone else. Look him up."

Later, I did. And, in fact, Stoltz was correct. But I doubt that at this point in his career he will ever realize his dream of working with the legendary director—at least *on purpose*. Smithee is the name that's put on a movie's credits when the real director refuses to shoulder the blame. Still, that's not to say Stoltz won't ever appear in a Smithee classic, since he's sure to be acting till he's old and gray.

In fact, he's not fearful about getting older. "I'm looking forward to going white. I had a dream that I became very fat and bald and grew a long beard and all my friends were very concerned. They said, 'Eric, you're *fat* and bald and you have a beard and you look so unattractive.' And I said, 'Yes, but I'm really happy.'"

Little Eric, happy at last?

"Don't you get sick of seeing actors who are in shape?" he says. "I must say I get a little bored seeing actors who have really great bodies, and actresses with perfect measurements. I'm becoming more interested in odd shapes and imperfections."

"Funny you should say that," I say. "Aidan Quinn recently told me he feels that perfectly muscled bodies on actors are inappropriate in some roles—migrant farmers, for example. But he thinks getting in shape is a good career move, which is probably why he doesn't do it."

Stoltz laughs. "He and I are similar in that way. And we're both talking to *you*!"

"Talking to me is a bad career move?" I say. "Speaking of career moves, can you get me a small part in one of your films?"

"I could," he says. "Why? Can you act?"

"I once had a line on 'All My Children.'"

"You're avoiding my question," he says. "Can you act?"

"No comment."

"There are many actors who are hard-working and need jobs," he says.

"So, no?"

"The answer is no."

And the interview is over, or so I thought until I got *another* fax from Stoltz on location in Scotland: "As I was walking down the street [after our interview], one of the girls who had skated over to us came up to me and said, 'Are you an actor?' and I said, rather pleased with myself, 'Yes I am.' She said, 'Can I have your autograph?' and I graciously said, 'Of course you can.' And just as I was about to sign her piece of paper, she said, 'I really loved you in *Reservoir Dogs*.' So I thanked her and signed Tim Roth's name."

Stephen Saban interviewed Aidan Quinn for the October Movieline.

Lend Me Your Ears

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 94

have appeared in 1994 strongly suggests that audial savagery is here to stay. Only time will tell whether playing the role of a somewhat cuddly kidnap victim who takes a huge bite out of a psychopath's ear in *A Perfect World* will lead to a big career for eight-year-old T.J. Lowther; many moviegoers probably wish that the kid's role had been played by Macaulay Culkin, and that it was the murderous jailbird who got to take a bite out of *his* ear. But the one-two punch of *Speed*, in which Dennis Hopper cheerfully jams a knife into a man's ear, and *Natural Born Killers*, in which Robert Downey Jr. goes mono, leaves no doubt that auricular mayhem has assumed its rightful place in the vocabulary of contemporary filmmaking, and that in the months and years to come we can look forward to many more films in which actors get their ears mutilated. In a sense, there is a poetic justice in all this: Actors have been sticking it in *our* ears for years, so now let's all sit back and enjoy them getting it stuck in theirs.

Or is a remark like that a lobe blow?

Joe Queenan wrote about actors who act with their hair in the September Movieline.

The Buyer's Guide

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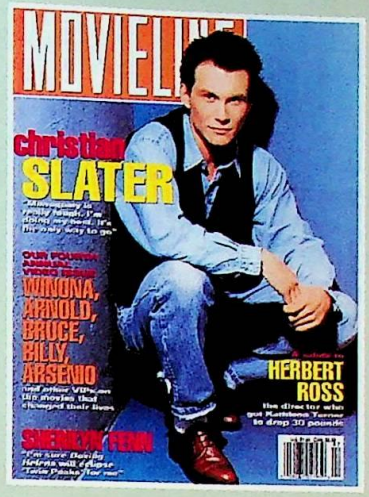
17 MONTHS AGO IN *MOVIELINE* There are many things that make you different from stars, and not the least of them is that you probably wouldn't say half of what they do on the record. In our July '93 issue, we asked 52 celebs to chat about the movies that changed their lives, and while *you* might worry about how it would look in print if you talked up, say, *Hollywood Vice Squad*, stars like **Winona Ryder** and **Arnold Schwarzenegger** just couldn't wait to tell all. Our favorite response? Nope, not **Glenn Close** recalling the joys of *The Littlest Outlaw*, nor **Mimi Rogers** gushing over *Born Free*—we loved **Carrie Fisher**'s account of watching her mom, **Debbie Reynolds**, in *Susan Slept Here* on TV when she was about six: "See, the guy kisses her *on the forehead*," Fisher recalled, "and I was so humiliated for my mother. I looked around to see if anyone else had seen this guy make a fool of my mother."



Only, as they say, in Hollywood. ■ **Christian Slater** cited *It's a Wonderful Life* as his treasured cinematic learning lesson: "It showed me how grateful I should be." Since he was our cover lad, we asked Slater—who, that's correct, was *also* on *Movieline*'s cover again just last month—how he was coping with safe sex in the '90s. "Monogamy is really tough," he confessed. We concur. "I'm doing my best." Who could ask for anything more? ■ Elsewhere, **Sherilyn Fenn**, star of the much talked-about *Boxing Helena*, had nary a word to say about **Kim Basinger**, who might have played her role but for the grace of God. Fenn assured us, "I'm sure *Boxing Helena* will eclipse 'Twin Peaks' for me," then added, "*if* people go see it." How prophetic! ■ Our **Hollywood Kids**, for reasons unknown to us, asked **Brian Austin Green** if he'd ever had his penis enlarged. "No need to," he explained, "I'm hung!"

Get back

SEPT. '89 Jane Fonda, Chris Guest ■ **OCT. '89** Bruce Willis ■ **NOV. '89** Daryl Hannah, Zalman King ■ **DEC. '89** Chevy Chase ■ **JAN. '90** Jessica Lange ■ **APR. '90** Jamie Lee Curtis, Directors Spheeris, Donen, Waters ■ **FEB. '91** Steve Martin, Life on Brando's Island ■ **DEC. '91** Bette Midler, Esai Morales, Lili Zanuck ■ **APR. '92** David Bowie ■ **MAY '92** Ellen Barkin, Juliette Lewis ■ **AUG. '92** Meryl Streep, Luke Perry ■ **SEPT. '92** Jennifer Jason Leigh, Cameron Crowe ■ **OCT. '92** Tim Robbins, Michael Biehn, Stephen Frears ■ **JAN./FEB. '93** "Sex" II: Demi Moore ■ **MAR. '93** "Young Hollywood" IV: Brad Pitt ■ **APR. '93** Johnny Depp, Adrian Lyne, Joel Schumacher ■ **MAY '93** Laura Dern, 100 Dumb Things Hollywood's Done Lately I ■ **JUNE '93** "Tough Cookies" III: Sharon Stone, Meg Ryan, Lily Tomlin ■ **AUG. '93** Mike Myers, Special '70s Issue ■ **SEPT. '93** Jeff Bridges, Peter Weir ■ **OCT. '93** Madeleine Stowe, Robert Altman ■ **NOV. '93** Bridget Fonda, Antonio Banderas ■ **DEC. '93** Richard Gere, Jim Sheridan ■ **JAN./FEB. '94** "Sex" III: Kim Basinger, Anne Rice ■ **MAR. '94** "Young Hollywood" V: Nicole Kidman, Brendan Fraser ■ **APR. '94** Drew Barrymore, 100 Dumb Things Hollywood's Done Lately II ■ **MAY '94** "Actors": Alec Baldwin, Alfre Woodard ■ **JUNE '94** "Tough Cookies" IV: Sharon Stone, Women We Can Do Without ■ **JULY '94** Marisa Tomei, Jim Carrey ■ **AUG. '94** Jean-Claude Van Damme, Pauly Shore, Dana Delany ■ **SEPT. '94** Charlie Sheen, Stephen Baldwin ■ **OCT. '94** Johnny Depp, Aidan Quinn, Camille Paglia ■ **NOV. '94** Christian Slater, James Woods, Patrick Stewart

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December '94

by christopher hunt

Women and Christmas

Please forgive me, in the spirit of the season, but I still get tears in my eyes each time I watch "A Charlie Brown Christmas." It's that part when the ol' blockhead chooses the pathetic little Christmas tree, then puts the ornament on, and half the needles fall off. Gets me every time. I finally got a tree on Monday, a stumpy but sturdy five-footer for the pool cabana I've lived in for a year now. *A year*. Mark the record producer and his girlfriend Cindy came over to help me decorate the thing. Last time I saw Cindy, she was a secretary at CAA. Now she's a hot agent at ICM. I know Mark has told her I'm still struggling to "come back": she gave me a grim smile when she asked where my latest script was—like maybe I've merely misplaced it.

I feel sorry for the damn tree; I bring it home and only four days later I'm abandoning it, heading East for the holidays. Amanda's dad's gardener says to take all the stuff off it and put it outside and he'll water it. I don't quite see the point. As I pack my bags, I feed the fire in the old cast-iron stove. Liza Richardson, the beautifully groovy DJ, spins Spanish Christmas madrigals on the public radio station. It's been drizzling all morning—an insidious, transparent fog blown steadily sideways by a thin, chilly wind. Soon the area around the pool is flooded, the drain clogged with dead leaves. *Variety* this morning was soaked and heavy—I picked it up from the wet front walk and put it on the radiator to dry. It's the first day of winter in L.A.

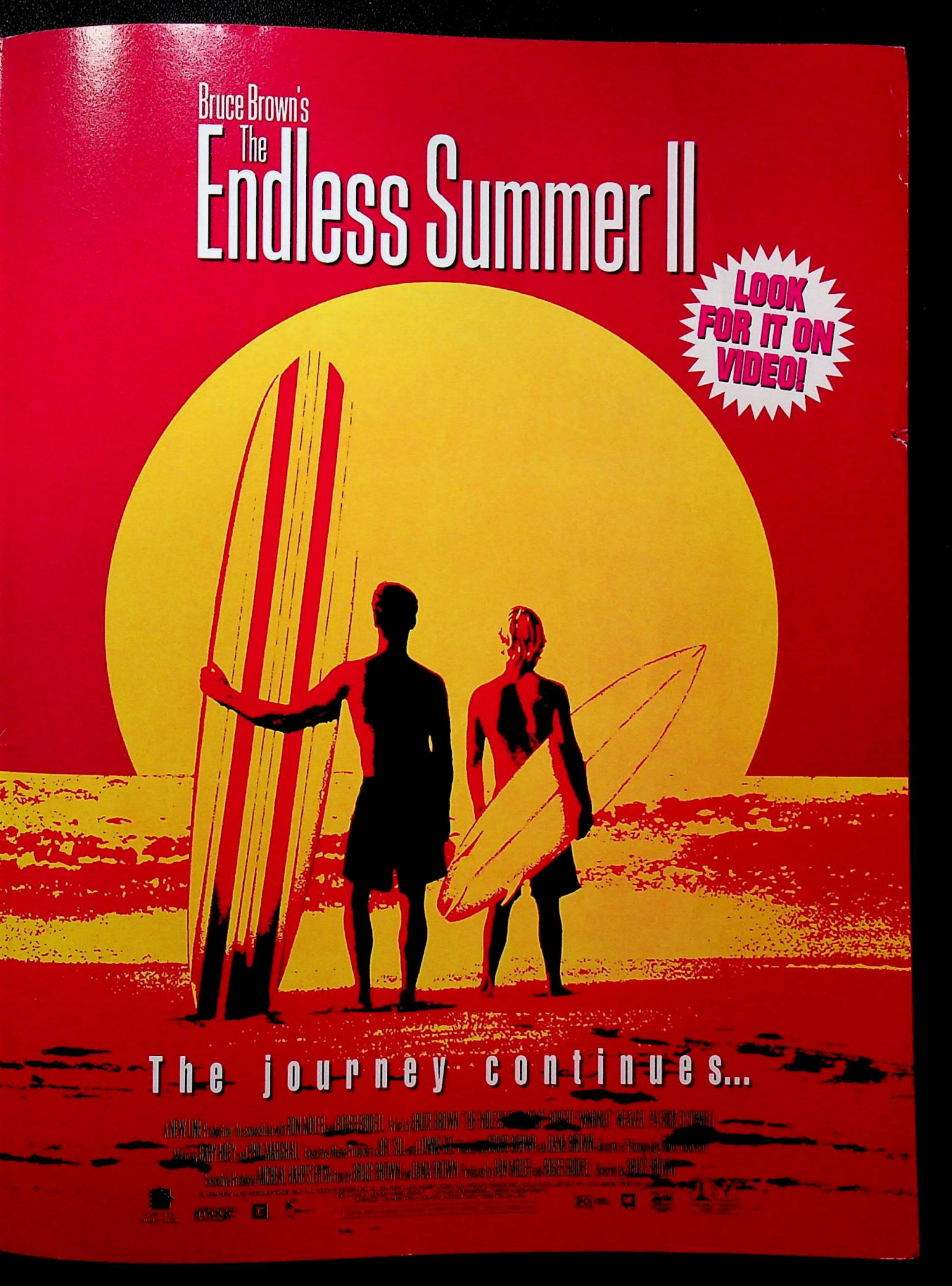
I open the sliding glass door to let the cigarette smoke out, and close it when the edge of the indoor-outdoor carpet darkens with mist. I open a trunk, shake mothballs from my wool sweaters, lay them on the couch to air out. The smell of naphthalene mingles with the scent of burnt sugar and orange rind coming from the tiny kitchen—left over from my final batch of Christmas presents. Purely out of economic necessity, I've resurrected my late grandmother's candy recipes. In the '70s, she'd ship bright tins of holiday confections up to me at boarding school—for my teachers, though the tins never made it out of the dorms. This year, I found a quaint apothecary in Santa Monica and bought tinctures of clove, peppermint and wintergreen. I used Grandmother's yellowed 3x5 cards and a candy thermometer. My entire shopping bill was $63.00. Everyone professes to be delighted with my gifts, hailing me as charming and original. That only happens when I'm not trying.

I put on *A Winter's Solstice*, a Windham Hill CD Patsy gave me three Christmases ago, when I traveled to Montréal to propose. She listened politely, then informed me she was getting engaged to some Greek guy and moving to Athens. Then she went into her room to type her Ph.D. thesis on Third World women. Me? I stood at the window in her living room sipping onion soup and cognac, watching twilight and snow fall on *vieux* Montréal. The street below was cluttered with McGill graduate students' dirty, ice-coated Hondas and Subarus and footprints in the new snow.

What is it about women and Christmas? This year I'd hoped to take the Andover actress/waitress home to Pittsburgh and then to New York—my uncle said I could stay at the Sherry-Netherland as long as I wanted. Here is what I'd had in mind: we'd forget about Hollywood, get snowed in at a party in Fox Chapel, calculate windchill factors, crush juniper berries for the roast goose, see my old friends and older parents and new babies. I'd show her my room, take her to church, go to the farm for a sleigh ride. That is, if there still are farms and sleigh rides. In New York, I'd impress her with lunch at Tim's mom's Art Deco palace in the Dakota, plus my encyclopedic knowledge of Village jazz joints. We'd huddle together constantly for warmth. Here is what happened: she said she loved someone else. I don't think it was anyone in particular. I had wanted to see her red-faced, in a scarf. Presbyterians find Episcopalians exotic. I'd wanted to watch her take her gloves off.

Jono the entertainment lawyer takes a piece of candy. "Life's like a box of choc'lates," he drawls. "You never know what kinda nuts you're gonna have to deal with." He takes a book from my bookshelf and says, "You can't go home again, Chris." He opens to the last page of *You Can't Go Home Again* and reads aloud: "'Something has spoken to me in the night, burning the tapers of the waning year; something has spoken in the night, and told me I shall die, I know not where'—Jesus! That's the most depressing book I ever read." We carry my luggage to his car. "What I never understood is why they made Charlie Brown director of the Christmas pageant," Jono says. "He was so self-involved and miserable. That's a writer, not a director. He did make one good command decision—sticking up for that sickly tree—so maybe he had vision after all." I remember to go back and unplug my tree, but I don't take it outside. It'll dry out and die, but that's okay—I'll use it for kindling in the new year.

daniel ray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